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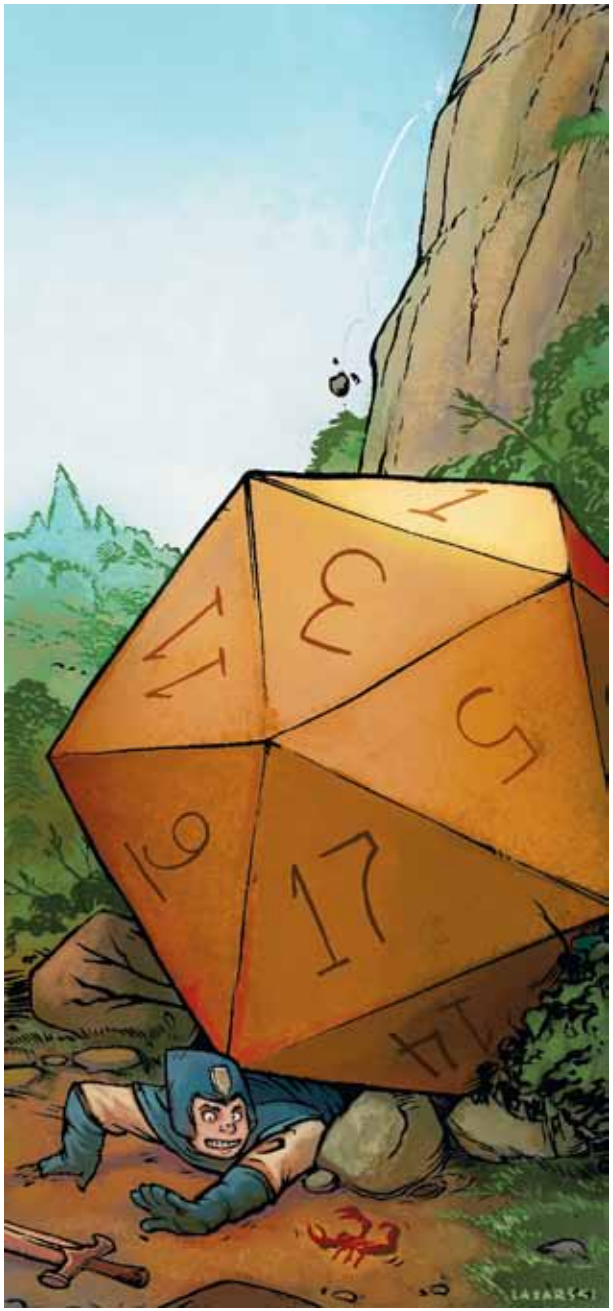

Parting Shots

By Stephen Radney-MacFarland

Illustration by Empty Room Studios

From that last gulp of Mountain Dew late on a Friday night, to finally finding Vecna's hidden sanctum at the far edge of 30th level, to the last sad session during the week of graduation, all things come to an end. This is my last Save My Game column. I've had a good time sharing some of the things I've learned in nearly 30 years of DMing (wow, that makes me feel a little old) and continue to learn with each game I run. Over the years, I've given a lot of advice on a variety of subjects. This month, I give you my parting shots. Partly a distilled version of all the various bits of advice Save My Game has offered under my stewardship, partly all the stuff that really matters when you're running a D&D game or campaign, this column is my last hurrah. Enjoy.

Don't Lose the Passion

When I worked in organized play, there were many times that we had to give someone an adventure to run cold. By that, I mean that we gave someone a copy of a 30-something-page adventure and had that person read it in an hour or less and then run a session of it at the convention. Typically, we did this when the regular DM couldn't make it to the show, got sick, or was just MIA in the early morning for reasons probably best left to the imagination. That plan might seem for a recipe for disaster, and sometimes it was. It's not optimal, to be sure, but neither is turning away folks who really want to play D&D. Strangely, more often than not, it went off without a hitch. Why? Because whenever possible, we picked the person who was the most excited to run the game.

Imagine this scenario: it's 8:30 A.M., you're mustering a horde of DMs at Gen Con, you realize that you're one DM short, and you need to find someone quickly or several people with tickets won't have fun during that slot. It's tempting to go to your old warhorses, the familiar guys and gals who have run hours and hours of convention sessions, and sometimes you need to do that. However, often I would gravitate toward the excited new person, hand jutting up and jumping like a kid desperate to be picked for a kickball team. People like that wanted to run the game. Heck, they were *begging* to run it. Choosing new people also gave us the chance to gauge how well they worked in the often-stressful convention environment. And although I knew those old warhorses would run a decent game with bleary eyes and mostly hidden gruff annoyance, it was better to give them some rest. A newbie might make some mistakes, but if he or she was having fun, chances were that the players would be having fun, too.

Now, I'm not going to lie to you—sometimes being a DM is hard work. Most of you know this already. You spend hours preparing for the game and then hours more trying to outsmart your players while fielding their questions and snark. Passion for creating a world, fun experiences, and audience (read: player) appreciation is the fuel that keeps that engine going strong. If you find that you're burning out, do something about it. If you run on empty for too long, you'll

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grow bitter, bored, and frustrated. You'll become resentful and spout off about random things on the Internet. Nobody wants that.

So what do you do to regain that passion? Take a break. It could be a break from DMing; sit on the other side of the screen for a while. It could be a break from your current campaign. Maybe the story has become so old hat that you want to try something new. Perhaps you want to run a horror game or something more political. Maybe try Gamma World® or shop around for another game—you'll find many good ones out there. Whatever the case, when you're burned out on something, stop doing it for a bit. Short breaks will ensure that you don't become so burned out that you quit playing for years or even for good.

Always Find the Fun

Being a DM and wielding the power of creation and narration over an entire world is fun, but it's only one aspect of the overall fun of D&D. I strongly believe that the act of DMing is an art, but I don't believe that it's an art for art's sake. We create art for people to enjoy. Rather than serving beauty or a more refined sense of aesthetics or semiotics, DMing is an art that serves a game, which in turn serves that crazy little thing we call fun.

Fun is like art; it's hard to define, but we know it when we see it. Sometimes it shouts and leaps into the air. Sometimes it wears the scowls of deep concentration. Often it wears a stupid grin. Most of us can look at folks in a situation and know whether they're having fun just by picking up clues from their body language. Doing that is harder when we're distracted or busy with complicated tasks—say, running monsters, looking up rules, or computing attacks and damage. The next time you DM, look up at your players from time to time and make sure you can see fun in their eyes, whether those eyes are bright with glee or narrow with steely determination. If you don't see any fun, and especially if you see the opposite, stop right there and reassess what you're doing. Ask yourself, "Where's the fun here?" What can you do immediately to change the situation from being frustrating or boring to one where everyone is having a blast?

The trick to making this change with true success is to know your players. Keep mental notes of all the things you've seen in the past that have caused them to have fun, and play with variations on those themes. But let's say that you don't know what those things are because you haven't spent enough time reflecting on the subject or don't know your players well enough yet. Don't worry—fun isn't too hard to figure out. Sure, every group has its own nuances. There are different styles of play, and some players see themselves as special butterflies that are different, complex, and well outside the norm. But regardless of such quirks, anyone who plays D&D will find fun in a few common areas.

The first area is beating down monsters. It seems almost a little dirty to say it that way, but the game is a power fantasy in which monsters are irredeemable bastards, and we get to kill them without any ethical questions getting in the way. Slaying monsters is a fun and victimless crime (unless you have a strange fixation with numbers and feel sorry for depleted hit point totals). The more wicked you make a monster, the more fun it is to kill. Of course, the opposite is also true. Saving people who don't deserve a terrible fate is fun and makes players feel good about the imaginary carnage they've wrought. Vanquishing the irredeemable and saving the innocent are the two aspects of being heroes, and most players have a visceral response to both. Those aspects are often the chief fuel of D&D storytelling; they embody a simpler ethic of a mythical time that is even more appealing when juxtaposed with the complications of real life. Even if you like shades of gray in storytelling (and I sure do), it's important to have some black-and-white quests and assumptions floating around your game table.

The second common area of fun is that people like treasure. That treasure might be information, titles, boons, gold, magic items, or leveling (the most important treasure in D&D). It's okay to deny treasure from time to time to build the players' appetites, but happy players are ones who receive a consistent and rewarding stream of treasure. What do I mean by "rewarding"? Power has something to do with it. Everyone likes to feel powerful, and fantasy RPGs tend to be power fantasies, but the best kind of treasure is one that allows the characters to interact with the world. D&D is also an exploration fantasy, and leaning more about a world is a big turn-on for most players. Often I dole out treasure in the form of interactive toys that lead to exploration and learning about the world.

A third way to make sure your game is fun is to be fair. It's easy to treat the DM's seat as a tyrant's throne, and when the cacophony of player voices gets to be too much, that temptation grows. Although I have great fun pretending that I'm actively working against the players and their characters' goals, in the end, I'm just a narrator for their stories. For those stories to be fulfilling and worth the effort, I must seem unbiased, serving a set of shared assumptions with something nearing precision but also with compassion and flexible leniency at times. Being fair is one of the hardest traits for a DM to pick up, but for this game, fair is the heart of fun. It's tough when it needs to be and yielding when it must be. Ultimately, fairness is a meditation, a struggle, a skill constantly strived for and maybe never mastered. But don't let that discourage you. Do your best to be fair, and your players will thank you in the end.

Foster Friendships

One of the greatest fringe benefits of roleplaying games is the friendship. You spend many hours with the people at your game table. Some of those hours will be stressful. Rules arguments, narrow escapes, and personal disagreements are bound to pop up, and every conflict has the potential to strain the friendships around the table. Whenever these conflicts happen, remember that the people you game with are friends and potential friends. You share a hobby and a sense of fun that is often not shared with the general public. Don't let personal disagreements ruin that. The bonds you make around the game table can last a lifetime, and those relationships are worth more than petty victories or spur-of-the-moment arguments.

Let the table chat roll at the beginning of each game. When you have a long-running group, take an interest in the personal lives of your fellow players. Celebrate their victories, and offer sympathy during challenging times. Spend time with them outside of the game. Go to their parties; celebrate their birthdays, graduations, and other life milestones. Conversely, allow them to do the same for you. It might seem small and irrelevant to the game at hand, but I guarantee that your play sessions will improve if you foster those friendships. Roleplaying games are like life in that way—only by working together with a sense of community, trust, and friendship will you overcome the greatest challenges.

Do What's Natural

There are many ways to run a game. I use initiative cards; other people use a white board to track initiative. I prefer good old-fashioned miniatures, some people like playing on virtual tabletops, and others follow a more narrative structure, feeling that minis and concrete position tracking slow down the story too much. Some folks ply their games with house rules and ad hoc interpretations, and others strictly adhere to the RAW (rules as written).

All these approaches are good. There is no right way of playing D&D in a universal sense; there is only the right way for you and your players. When you start your first game, it might take a while to figure out what feels natural. Don't be afraid to try new techniques and experiment with new ideas. Eventually you'll get into the groove of what feels right, and once you do, keep on doing those things. When the game and how you run it become second nature, when you cut down on flipping through books and digressing into strange rules discussions, people can settle in, delve into the narrative, and have fun. That, at its heart, is what the game is about and why we love playing it.

Farewell

Well, that's it. I'm done. Some of this advice might seem like common sense, and it probably is for those of you who have been playing D&D for as long as I have (if not longer). But sometimes even the simplest things need to be said because it's easy to lose sight of them. That's what Save My Game has been all about. Sometimes the idea has been to look at innovation, to find new ways to skin the old cat, but more often it's been to put forward the conventional wisdom of RPGs in new ways and to keep it fresh in our minds. I hope you've enjoyed reading this column as least as much as I've enjoyed presenting it through the years.

About the Author

Stephen Radney-MacFarland is a game designer living large in the Seattle area. He was a developer for 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons and a content developer for 3rd Edition organized play, and he has taught game design for the past three years. Stephen currently works at Paizo Publishing as a designer for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* and works on the occasional D&D product. He also runs more games than his wife would prefer.

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Ecology of the Satyr of the Night

By Rodney Thompson

Illustration by Eric Belisle

The twisted reflection of a capricious troublemaker, a satyr of the night is the dangerous opposite of its fey kin in every way. Normal satyrs are decadent and hedonistic, while satyrs of the night are grim and serious. Normal satyrs are friendly to a fault, but satyrs of the night see only enemies around them. While other satyrs frolic in the eternal green of the Feywild, satyrs of the night hide themselves in the deepest, darkest forests of that realm. Every aspect of the satyr of the night's being is an accursed mirror of a previous life, for the pleasures that once fulfilled a satyr now drive the satyr of the night to madness.

Sages of the Feywild claim that satyrs of the night are the frightening result of shadow magic seeping into that realm and reshaping its inhabitants. All satyrs of the night are infused with such magic, and their outer forms reflect this. Satyrs of the night are dangerous and evil, and their every action serves to spread vile corruption throughout the Feywild. Despite this corruption, satyrs of the night remain fey creatures possessed of their own free will, malevolent though it might be.

History

Even the long-lived races of the Feywild are hesitant to ascribe any specific time to the first appearances of the satyrs of the night, whose history stretches back well before human memory. Many consider the true history of these shadow-tainted creatures a secret closely guarded by the Sidhe lords of the Feywild, with conspiracy-minded scholars claiming that the ancient fey nobles were responsible for creating the first satyrs of the night. Truth-seekers possessing more wealth than fear have offered handsome rewards for those who would break into the hidden vaults of Feywild nobles to uncover the truth behind their secrecy.

A more plausible—and more frightening—theory behind the satyrs of the night asserts that the knowledge of their origin has been willfully purged from the world by Unseelie powers. The most influential of the Unseelie creatures of the Feywild keep the satyrs of the night shrouded in mystery. Those who come too close to this secret lore find themselves the target of creeping Unseelie assassins and other dire foes.

Origins

All satyrs of the night begin their lives as normal satyrs, and are subsequently transformed by the corruption of shadow magic. What causes a satyr

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to become a creature of twisted evil depends on circumstances. A satyr might choose to subject itself to corruption as part of a plot to seek revenge on powerful enemies. Another might seek the transformation to escape the transgressions of its former life, accepting the darkness as a means of assuming a completely new identity.

The earliest historical appearances of the satyrs of the night occur during the war that split the elves, the drow, and the eladrin into three distinct races. The hinterlands of the Feywild have always merged with other planes, and during that ancient war, such crossings were ripped open by powerful magic. Links between the Shadowfell and the Feywild were frequently opened in the course of this conflict, allowing shadow magic to seep through. Over long years, those sites where the fabric of the planes was inexorably torn have become the darkest swamps and most forbidding forests of the Feywild.

The creatures that lived in such places were tainted by the influx of shadow power, and many of the most frightening inhabitants of the Feywild can trace their origins back to these days. It is said that dark creatures lurk in the most primeval corners of the Feywild, hidden since those ancient days.

Mastering the Shadow

Modern satyrs of the night are created from normal satyrs that seek out Unseelie magic and end up being transformed into a dark reflection of their former selves. Many satyrs of the night began as warlocks, creating gloom pacts with Unseelie fey creatures strong in shadow magic. For this reason, the Sidhe lords have a standing bounty on the heads of any Feywild creature strong enough in shadow magic to forge such pacts, hoping to limit the ongoing corruption of their presence. Fearful of such attention, satyrs of the night ensconce themselves in fortresses fashioned out of the husks of massive, decaying trees, or in stone structures abandoned by other races, emerging only occasionally to grant a boon to one of their servitors.

Some satyrs simply stumble on the agent of their transformation, often a remnant of the ancient incursions by the Shadowfell into the Feywild. These can take the form of physical relics, imbued with shadow magic that ultimately corrupts the one that carries it. A satyr of the night that begins its path to darkness in this way jealously guards the item that began its transformation, treating it as an extension of its own being. At other times, shadow corruption imbues a location where the satyr spends significant time, absorbing the corruption from its environs. A satyr of the night created in this way guards its place of shadow power and keeps its location secret, fearing that its strength will be diminished if that site were ever to be purified and its decay purged.

Regardless of the first steps down the path of darkness, satyrs of the night eventually learn to master the shadow magic that twists and corrupts them. This mastery might take years, during which time the satyr seeks out servants to scour the Feywild and the planes beyond, seeking ever more powerful shadow magic. Sometimes these lackeys are like-minded creatures of growing evil. At other times, a satyr of the night tricks unsuspecting adventurers into recovering fragments of forbidden lore on its behalf, hiding the truth from the would-be heroes.

Over time, the corruption of shadow takes greater hold, and a satyr of the night learns to wield shadow magic as intuitively as other creatures of the Feywild wield arcane power.

Physiology

Satyrs of the night are visually striking and distinctive in appearance from other satyrs. Their horns grow longer and become twisted, darkening to a deep ebony hue. Their skin turns the color of obsidian, their features growing more exaggerated and sinister. Satyrs of the night are taller and leaner than their unchanged kin, their mouths full of jagged teeth and their gnarled hands capped with sharp claws. Their bodies become monstrous, striking terror into the hearts of those who see them.

Shadow-Warped Bodies

The body of a satyr of the night is inherently infused with powerful shadow magic. As a result, these creatures can fade into the darkness with ease. They conceal themselves by light of day, emerging from hiding only when they can be assured of the protection of shadow. During their incursions into the natural world, they travel only after sunset. In some cases, the dark mayhem of a satyr of the night is mistaken for that of a vampire, creating confusion among the common folk when well-known protections against vampires fail to stop the satyr's attacks.

A satyr of the night is also naturally resistant to the rot and decay typically associated with shadow magic. Necrotic energy has a greatly diminished effect against a satyr of the night, which makes these creatures a threat to undead that make extensive use of necrotic power. Some satyrs of the night are strong enough to pose a challenge to liches and other masters of necrotic energy.

THE TOWER OF RHATH

Long ago, a powerful lich dwelled in a place called the Tower of Rhath, ruling over a swath of the Feywild where even the Sidhe lords dared not oppose him. When the Sidhe lords could no longer stand the foul creature's presence, they gathered together in council and said, "Who can oppose this lich? Who can reclaim the Tower of Rhath?" At that moment came a rumble of thunder and a dark cloud of smoke in the midst of their chambers, and from it stepped the twisted form of a satyr of the night.

"I have heard your lamentations," the satyr of the night said, "and I am come to the aid of this council. Give me your ten best warriors, and I will rid the forest of this lich."

Though loath to accept the help of such a creature of darkness, the Sidhe lords feared to stand against the lich themselves. Their ten best warriors marched away with the satyr of the night, into the dark forest near the Tower of Rhath.

For weeks, there came no word. Finally, the Sidhe lords worked up the courage to send another expedition to the Tower of Rhath. There, they found the gates guarded by powerful warriors—the same warriors that had accompanied the satyr of the night. Their eyes were black as pitch, their minds stolen and replaced by slavish obedience.

Eventually, the satyr of the night descended from the Tower of Rhath to meet with the expedition. "What has happened?" the Sidhe leaders asked. "Have you rid the tower of the lich?"

"I have done all that I promised," responded the satyr of the night. "Now, come into *my* tower, and stay awhile. . . ."

Psychology

Satyrs of the night are thoroughly wicked creatures, their thoughts tainted by the death and decay of shadow magic. A satyr of the night that completes its transformation abandons its old life, viewing its former self as a distinct creature now dead. Anyone investigating the identity of a satyr of the night before its transformation might well conclude that the satyr died, its possessions abandoned or destroyed.

Every aspect of the satyr of the night's psychology is a bizarre corruption of the psychology of a normal satyr. Where satyrs are compelled by a natural curiosity, a satyr of the night takes that trait to sadistic levels. A satyr of the night might slay and dissect a creature it wishes to know better, using shadow magic to speak to that creature's corpse and delve into its secrets. When a satyr of the night's curiosity is stoked, it sends its agents out to retrieve objects or creatures at any cost. Creatures unfortunate enough to be taken to its lair are picked apart—sometimes while still alive—at the satyr of the night's leisure.

Where a normal satyr is hedonistic, a satyr of the night is filled with avarice and gluttony. Satyrs of the night do not simply covet riches and worldly pleasures—they seek to steal such things from others by force or deception. A satyr of the night looks for someone it can hurt in the process of taking what it wants, whether by draining the vaults of enemies, destroying the lives of former friends to settle old grudges, or driving powerful rivals into destitution and ruin. Satyrs of the night do not reach a state of pleasant drunkenness like their untainted kin when they imbibe. Instead, they are prone to intoxicated rages that fuel destruction and devastation. A satyr of the night on a drunken tear is a force that leaves a trail of bodies in its wake.

Satyrs believe that the fate that befalls sentient creatures occurs for a reason, and that all creatures live the lives they deserve. Satyrs of the night extend this belief, maintaining that any creature they can dominate and enslave deserves its fate. Any wrong or misfortune they inflict on others is seen as a kind of karmic punishment.

In their own eyes, satyrs of the night are meant to rule the weak and take whatever they desire. If this were not so, they would not be able to crush their enemies and force their will on the weak in the first place. Those who must deal with a satyr of the night see this attitude manifested in arrogance akin to that of the haughtiest Sidhe lords.

Satyrs believe that one should never engage in a battle on even footing, an idea that the satyr of the night fully embraces. A satyr of the night never attacks its foes head-on, instead lying in ambush or hiring others to waylay its foes from a distance. Satyrs of the night employ proxies and agents for their evil deeds, working alone at the center of a web of hired and enslaved allies. A satyr of the night weakens and drains its enemies first, employing mercenaries and assassins, hurling waves of lesser allies at an opponent, and striking at an enemy's loved ones before finally facing that enemy.

Redemption

Some believe that the satyr of the night's origin as a noble fey offers a chance to save these creatures, helping them turn away from the shadow. Whispered rumors of redeemed satyrs of the night are heard in the Feywild from time to time. However, satyrs of the night are so steeped in shadow magic that they retain only the barest essence of their former fey selves.

Even among those few scholars who acknowledge the possibility of redeeming a satyr of the night, it is agreed that such a redemption would require the shadow magic to be burned out of the satyr's body. Those who doubt the existence of redeemed satyrs of the night believe that the creatures themselves spread rumors of redemption. By doing so, a satyr of the night hopes to stay the hands of former friends and would-be allies when its true nature is discovered.

Culture

Satyrs of the night lead solitary lives, and little true culture develops among these shadow-tainted creatures. What culture they do share is derived from common traits rather than common cause.

Religion

Although many satyrs of the night eschew religion entirely, putting their trust in shadow magic before any deity, a few of their kind worship dark powers. A satyr of the night that sees its transformation as a positive metamorphosis might look favorably on the Raven Queen, whose claim over the Shadowfell makes her the ultimate source of a satyr of the night's power. Such satyrs of the night do not adhere to the Raven Queen's neutrality, however, treating her more as a benefactor than as a subject of true worship.

Other satyrs of the night revel in their wickedness, tying their religious loyalties to evil gods or the powerful lords of the Nine Hells. These creatures frequently engage in profane rituals and ceremonies dedicated to their chosen masters. Those who interrupt such rituals can become participants—or a key sacrifice. Innocents accidentally corrupted by these evil ceremonies usually suffer some ill effect until the satyr of the night that led the ceremony is slain.

Unseelie Patrons

One of the most common roles played by satyrs of the night in the social ecology of the Feywild is acting as an Unseelie patron for others seeking power. Some forge pacts with warlocks, making particularly versatile patrons as they engage in fey pacts and gloom pacts with creatures seeking their power. Through a pact bond, a satyr of the night draws others into its circle of allies and supplicants. Powerful patriarchs among the satyrs of the night might have a dozen or more creatures beholden to them as a result of such pacts, allowing the satyr to lurk behind the scenes while agents do its bidding elsewhere. The most powerful satyrs of the night have the ability to make their subjects' nightmares manifest in reality, creating a strong deterrent against betrayal.

Beyond administering pact magic, these shadowy creatures often operate like crime lords. A satyr of the night builds up an organization of indebted agents, keeping tabs on its surroundings and nearby settlements. It dispatches assassins to dispose of enemies or allies that have gotten out of line, hoards wealth and spreads bribes among the Sidhe lords, and takes delight in any breakdown of society it can engender.

A satyr of the night is to the people and creatures of the Feywild as the master of a thieves' guild is to a city. Both wield significant power, both operate outside regular authority, and both trade in corruption, vice, and violence as a matter of course. Those who live in an area where a satyr of the night has influence face the same dangers as those who live near powerful criminals. One never wants to become indebted to a satyr of the night, or to raise its ire.

SATYR OF THE NIGHT LORE

Arcana DC 20: Satyrs of the night are satyrs that have been transformed by exposure to shadow magic. These frightening and monstrous reflections of normal satyrs have been corrupted in body, mind, and soul. Satyrs of the night are wicked creatures considered to be members of the Unseelie fey. They frequently act as patrons of gloom pact and fey pact warlocks, and take great pleasure in corrupting and manipulating the innocent creatures of the Feywild.

Encounters

Preferring to operate in secret from the shadows, satyrs of the night are only rarely seen. When adventurers meet one of these creatures, allies often surround it. Rarely is more than one satyr of the night encountered at a time.

Satyrs of the night associate with other evil creatures of the Feywild weaker than themselves, including xivorts, spriggans, umbral sprites, harpies, gremlins, hags, and verbeegs. They avoid drow and fomorians, since such creatures are usually too powerful or too well connected to be drawn into a satyr of the night's web of corruption.

Satyrs of the Night in Combat

Satyrs of the night let their allies fight for them. When that doesn't work, they force their foes to protect them. A satyr of the night is capable of using shadow magic to infuse its words with enchantment, drawing weak-minded foes to its side, then using those foes as shields against other attacks. A satyr of the night has no problem with retreating when outmatched, since it deems its life more important than the outcome of any fight. In such cases, a satyr of the night might urge its doomed allies to continue the battle as it slips away.

Satyr of the Night	**Level 13 Lurker**
Medium fey humanoid	XP 800
HP 103; **Bloodied** 51	**Initiative** +13
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 24	**Perception** +12
Speed 6	Darkvision
Resist half necrotic damage; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	

Traits

Shadow Dweller

The satyr has partial concealment. Whenever the satyr gains concealment from dim light, the satyr is instead invisible.

Standard Actions

Claws (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage, ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends), and 3d8 extra damage to a dazed or dominated target.

Words of Enchantment (charm) ✦ **Recharge** when the satyr uses *claws*

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +16 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Miss: The target is dazed until the end of the satyr's next turn.

Effect: The satyr slides the target up to 5 squares to a square adjacent to itself.

Move Actions

Lure Away ✦ **At-Will**

Requirement: The satyr must have a creature dominated.

Effect: The satyr shifts up to its speed, and an adjacent creature that the satyr is dominating is pulled along with it, staying adjacent to the satyr during the movement.

Triggered Actions

Charmed Target ✦ **At-Will**

Trigger: A melee or ranged attack targets the satyr while it is adjacent to a creature dominated or dazed by the satyr's *words of enchantment*.

Effect (Free Action): The triggering attack instead targets the creature affected by the satyr's *words of enchantment*.

Retreat to the Shadows (teleportation) ✦ **Encounter**

Trigger: The satyr is bloodied.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The satyr teleports up to 10 squares and becomes invisible until it hits or misses with an attack or until the end of its next turn.

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +17, Intimidate +17

Str 14 (+8)	**Dex** 17 (+9)	**Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 19 (+10)	**Int** 12 (+7)	**Cha** 22 (+12)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Elven

Satyr of the Night Patriarch	**Level 15 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid	XP 1,200
HP 148; **Bloodied** 74	**Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26	**Perception** +14
Speed 6	Darkvision
Resist half necrotic damage; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	

Traits

Shadow Dweller

The satyr has partial concealment. Whenever the satyr gains concealment from dim light, the satyr is instead invisible.

Standard Actions

Claws (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10 + 2 damage, and ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

Effect: The satyr slides the target up to 3 squares.

Strangling Shadows ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6 + 9 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Living Nightmares (conjuration, fear, psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 2d10 + 13 psychic damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The satyr conjures a living nightmare in an unoccupied square adjacent to each target. A nightmare can be attacked, using the satyr's defenses, and has 1 hit point. Enemies are immobilized while adjacent to a nightmare. The nightmares last until the end of the encounter if not destroyed.

Shadowy Visage (fear, psychic, zone) ✦ **Encounter**

Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +18 vs. Will

Hit: 2d10 + 6 psychic damage, and the satyr slides the target up to the target's speed.

Miss: Half damage, and the satyr can slide the target 1 square.

Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the satyr's next turn. In the zone, bright light becomes dim light.

Skills Arcana +15, Bluff +18, Intimidate +18

Str 14 (+9)	**Dex** 14 (+9)	**Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 20 (+12)	**Int** 17 (+10)	**Cha** 23 (+13)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Elven

About the Author

Rodney Thompson, currently the Tabletop Games Manager for Dungeons & Dragons R&D at Wizards of the Coast, is originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee. His credits for the Dungeons & Dragons® game include the *Dark Sun*® *Campaign Setting*, *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*™, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*™, *Monster Vault*™, and *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild*™.

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Creature Incarnations: Hordelings

By Tim Eagon

Illustration by Chad King

Hordelings are the ultimate expression of the twisted, chaotic nature of the Abyss. Other than sharing a truly evil and destructive essence, no two of these fiendish creatures are alike.

This article expands on the hordeling entry in *The Book of Vile Darkness*™ by introducing the greater hordeling. Individual hordelings are normally tiny and insignificant, but greater hordelings are bigger, meaner, and much more dangerous. No two hordelings look exactly alike, and greater hordelings are powerful enough that their differentiation makes them a more potent threat. This article presents customization options that emphasize each greater hordeling's bizarre appearance and abilities.

Enduring Evil: Any experienced demonologist can quickly identify a dretch, a vrock, or a hezrou, despite minor variations in appearance and abilities among such demons. However, the demons known as hordelings defy such easy categorization. Their physical forms and powers vary widely. Swarms of these fiends roam the Abyss, fighting among themselves and devouring anything they encounter.

Although most hordelings have short lives, some manage to survive long enough to grow in size and power. It might be possible for a hordeling to evolve into a new kind of demon, but no record of such a change has ever been found. Instead, a typical hordeling remains trapped in a larger version of its original diminutive form.

Hard to Command: Other demons might attempt to force a pack of greater hordelings into servitude. However, hordelings are notoriously difficult to control, even by the low standards of demonkind. Although greater hordelings might briefly yield to the will of a more powerful demon, the creatures are extremely untrustworthy, rebellious, and quarrelsome. Most hordeling packs quickly disintegrate due to desertion, infighting, and mutiny, particularly if their ostensible commanders display any hint of weakness.

The Bringer of Doom: Greater hordelings are as difficult to summon as they are to control. Only powerful artifacts, such as the infamous *Bringer of Doom*, can summon more than a few such creatures at a time into the mortal realm. That artifact is an ancient device said to date from shortly after the creation of the Abyss; it appears as a small wooden box with a dark red gem set atop it. When the gem is depressed, the box unleashes a blinding flash of abyssal energy that can annihilate everything in a wide area. The energy also rips open a temporary portal to the Abyss, through which countless hordelings emerge, bringing ruin to everything they encounter. When the portal closes, the *Bringer of Doom* reappears in another location to await rediscovery.

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Creating Greater Hordelings

Every greater hordeling is different from its namesakes. When you create a new greater hordeling, you pick its role, and then you roll on a series of tables to determine its statistics, powers, and appearance. Seeing what kind of weird combinations result can be fun. (You can also use these tables and statistics to create other strains of demons.) Make sure you have your dice, then follow these steps.

1. Choose a Role Template

A role template is a stripped-down statistics block that predetermines many of a hordeling's abilities and statistics based on its level and role. Subsequent steps further modify and augment these statistics.

Artillery

Hordeling artillery demons have good natural intuition and awareness, as well as accurate ranged attacks that deal respectable damage.

Perception: An artillery hordeling has training in Perception 50 percent of the time.

Greater Hordeling Artillery	**Level 13 Artillery**
Elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 800
HP 100; **Bloodied** 50	**Initiative** +12
AC 27, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25	**Perception** +10
Immune polymorph	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Melee Basic Attack ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage.	
➶ **Ranged Basic Attack ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d10 + 12 damage.	
Str 14 (+8) **Dex** 22 (+12)	**Wis** 18 (+10)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 10 (+6)	**Cha** 12 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil	

Brute

A hordeling brute is a dull-witted, aggressive melee monster.

Great Size: Brutes are often big. They receive a +1 bonus on the Size table.

Perception: A brute has training in Perception 25 percent of the time.

Greater Hordeling Brute	**Level 13 Brute**
Elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 800
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80	**Initiative** +10
AC 25, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24	**Perception** +6
Immune polymorph	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Melee Basic Attack ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 13 damage.	
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 18 (+10)	**Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 9 (+5)	**Cha** 16 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil	

Controller

Controllers among the greater hordelings are smart and very charismatic.

Able to Communicate: A controller can usually speak. Add 1 when you roll on the Language table.

Perception: A controller always has training in Perception.

Greater Hordeling Controller	**Level 13 Controller**
Elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 800
HP 130; **Bloodied** 65	**Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26	**Perception** +11
Immune polymorph	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Melee Basic Attack ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage.	
Effect: The hordeling slides the target up to 2 squares.	
Str 14 (+8) **Dex** 16 (+9)	**Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 12 (+7)	**Cha** 22 (+12)
Alignment chaotic evil	

Varied Attacks: When you create a controller, roll twice on the Special Attacks table, placing the attacks in the appropriate action categories. Reroll any duplicate results.

Skirmisher

Quick and devious, hordeling skirmishers prefer to pick off targets weaker than they are.

Mobile Melee Attack: When using its *mobile melee attack* power, the skirmisher can use any mode of movement it has. You can assign a particular mode of movement to the power if you prefer.

Perception: A skirmisher has training in Perception 50 percent of the time.

Speedy: Skirmishers move rapidly. They receive a +1 bonus on the Speed table.

Variable Combat Advantage Trait: A hordeling skirmisher always gains a benefit from gaining combat advantage, which is expressed as a trait in the monster's statistics. When you create a hordeling skirmisher, roll on the Combat Advantage table. Then add the rolled trait to the skirmisher role template.

Combat Advantage (d6)	
1-2	**3d6 extra damage**
3-4	**Ongoing 10 damage (save ends)**
5-6	**Critical on a 17-20**

Traits
Combat Advantage
The hordeling deals 3d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it.

Traits
Combat Advantage
The hordeling deals ongoing 10 damage (save ends) against any creature granting combat advantage to it.

Traits
Combat Advantage
The hordeling can score a critical hit on a roll of 17-20 against any creature granting combat advantage to it.

Greater Hordeling Skirmisher Level 13 Skirmisher
Elemental humanoid (demon) XP 800

HP 130; **Bloodied** 65 **Initiative** +14
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Immune polymorph

Standard Actions

⊕ **Melee Basic Attack ✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 10 damage.

↓ **Mobile Melee Attack ✦ At-Will**
Effect: The hordeling moves up to its speed and makes a melee basic attack at any point during the movement. The hordeling doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Str 16 (+9) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 9 (+5) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil

2. Add Default Characteristics

Greater hordelings are demons suited to the chaotic nature of the Abyss. They also have the potential to deal almost any type of damage.

Variable Resistance

Unless you replace it with another power or trait, a hordeling has *variable resistance* as a triggered action.

Triggered Actions

Variable Resistance ✦ 2/Encounter
Trigger: The hordeling takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.
Effect (Free Action): The hordeling gains resist 15 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter or until it uses *variable resistance* again.

Damage Types and Keywords

If the hordeling has a power or a trait that deals untyped damage, you can roll on the table below to see if that power or trait instead deals damage of a specific type. You can also pick a damage type. If a power has a damage type, the power also has that type's keyword.

Damage Type and Keyword (d20)	
1-8	None
9	Acid
10	Cold
11	Fire
12	Force
13	Lightning
14	Necrotic
15	Poison
16-17	Psychic
18	Thunder
19-20	Roll twice (ignore duplicates)*

*On two damage type results, the attack deals both damage types.

Basic Traits

Roll on the following tables, and apply the results to the role template. If a result provides a power or a trait that requires more explanation, the power or trait follows the table.

Size (d6; +1 if the hordeling is a brute)	
1	Small
2-5	Medium
6-7	Large*

*The range of the hordeling's melee attacks is 2.

Special Senses (d6)	
1	Low-light vision
2-3	Darkvision
4	Darkvision, blindsight 3
5	Blindsight 10 (the hordeling is blind)*
6	Darkvision, truesight 3

*A blind hordeling is immune to the blinded condition and to gaze attacks.

Traits

Truesight
The hordeling can see invisible creatures and objects.

Speed (d6; +1 if the hordeling is a skirmisher)	
1	5 squares
2-4	6 squares
5-6	7 squares
7	8 squares

Special Movement Modes (d10)*	
1-3	None
4	Terrain walk (roll a d4: 1, earth walk; 2, forest walk; 3, ice walk; 4, swamp walk)
5	Burrow (roll a d4: 4, tunneling)
6	Climb (roll a d4: 4, spider climb)
7	Fly (roll a d4: 1, clumsy; 2-3, normal; 4, hover)
8	Swim (add the aquatic trait)
9	The hordeling has the *teleport* power
10	Roll twice (ignore duplicates)

*Roll on the Speed table again to determine the speed for any special movement mode.

Traits

Aquatic
The hordeling can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Move Actions

Teleport (teleportation) **✦ At-Will**
Effect: The hordeling teleports up to a number of squares equal to half its speed + 1d4.

Trained Skills (d6)	
1	Acrobatics
2	Athletics
3	Insight
4	Intimidate
5	Stealth
6	Roll twice (ignore duplicates)

Languages (d6; +1 if the hordeling is a controller)	
1	None, but understands Abyssal
2-3	Abyssal
4-5	Abyssal plus one other
6-7	Telepathy (1d4 × 5 squares)*

*A hordeling that has telepathy also speaks Abyssal and one other language 50 percent of the time.

3. Add Special Attack Powers

Roll on the following table to determine the hordeling's special attack powers, and add them to the role template. Power descriptions follow the table, and some of them are purposefully abstract. When you create your hordeling, think about how the power might actually work. For example, a hordeling that has *trip attack* might use its legs, its tail, or a weapon to knock enemies prone.

Special Attacks (d8; roll twice for a controller*)	
1	Bloodthirsty
2	Breath weapon
3	Double attack
4	Enfeebling gaze
5	Enhanced basic attack
6	Ferocity
7	Stinking breath
8	Trip attack

*When rolling twice for a controller, ignore duplicates.

Triggered Actions
Bloodthirsty ✦ At-Will
Trigger: The hordeling bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer.
Effect (Free Action): The hordeling makes a basic attack.

Standard Actions
Breath Weapon ✦ Encounter
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage, or 3d10 + 10 if the hordeling is a brute.
Miss: Half damage.

Standard Actions
Double Attack ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: The hordeling uses one of its basic attacks twice.

Minor Actions
Bewildering Gaze (charm) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +16 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dazed until the end of the hordeling's next turn.

Triggered Actions
Enhanced Basic Attack ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Trigger: The hordeling hits with a basic attack.
Effect (Free Action): The attack deals 10 extra damage, and the hordeling slides the target up to 3 squares.

Triggered Actions
Ferocity ✦ Encounter
Trigger: The hordeling drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The hordeling makes a basic attack.

Standard Actions
Stinking Breath (poison, zone) **✦ Encounter**
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends), or ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends) if the hordeling is a brute.
Effect: The blast creates a zone that lasts until the end of the hordeling's next turn. Squares in the zone are lightly obscured. Any creature that ends its turn in the zone is takes 5 poison damage and is dazed until the start of its next turn.

Triggered Actions
Tripping Attack ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Trigger: The hordeling hits with a basic attack.
Effect (Free Action): The target falls prone.

4. Add Traits and Utility Powers

Determine the hordeling's traits and utility powers, then add them to the role template.

Traits and Utility Powers (d8)	
1	Demonic fury
2	Disorienting shrieking
3	Empowered hordeling
4	Invisibility
5	Phasing
6	Regeneration
7	Superior senses
8	Threatening reach*

*Roll again for a Small hordeling, keeping this trait if you roll it a second time. A Small or Medium hordeling that has this trait has the range of its melee attacks increased to 2. A Large hordeling has the range of its melee attacks increased to 3 only 25 percent of the time.

Traits
Demonic Fury ✦ Aura 1
While the hordeling is bloodied, any enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 10 damage.

Traits
Disorienting Shrieking ✦ Aura 1
Any nondeafened enemy in the aura takes a -4 penalty to attack rolls that it makes during another creature's turn.

Traits
Empowered Hordeling
The hordeling has 1 action point.

Minor Actions
Invisibility (illusion) **✦ At-Will**
Effect: The hordeling becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.

Traits
Phasing
The hordeling has phasing.

Traits

Regeneration

The hordeling regains 10 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the hordeling takes radiant damage, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Traits

Superior Senses

Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the hordeling.

Traits

Threatening Reach

The hordeling can make opportunity attacks against enemies within the range of its melee attacks.

5. Determine Appearance

Roll on the following tables to determine the physical appearance of a greater hordeling. The results are almost entirely cosmetic, having an impact on a hordeling's statistics only as noted. If a detail doesn't fit your concept, you can reroll or select a suitable option.

Head (d6)	
1	Wedge-shaped
2	Conical
3	Discoid
4	Spherical
5	Cubical
6	Ovoid

Head Adornment (d8)	
1	Bald
2	Mane
3	Frills
4	Lumps
5	Feathers
6-8	Horns

Overall Visage (d6)	
1	Gibbering, drooling
2	Glaring, menacing
3	Twitching, crawling
4	Wrinkled, seamed
5	Loose, slack
6	Rotting, tattered

Ears (d6)*	
1	Large, pointed
2	Small, pointed
3	Huge, pointed
4	Large, fanlike
5	Large, drooping
6	Ear holes

*A hordeling has 1d4 - 1 ears.

Eyes (d6)*	
1	Huge, protruding
2	Small, stalked
3	Large, multifaceted
4	Small, sunken
5	Large, round
6	Small, slitted

*A hordeling has 1d4 eyes, or 1d4 - 1 if blind.

Eye Color (d6)	
1	Flat black
2	Glowing (choose color)
3	Metallic
4	Colored (choose one)
5	Flat white
6	Opalescent

Nose (d6)*	
1	Bestial
2	Slits
3	Hanging snout or trunk
4	Long, pointed
5	Large, warty
6	Skeletal (hollow)

*A hordeling has 1d3 - 1 noses.

Mouth (d6)*	
1	Tusked
2	Numerous small fangs
3	Long canines
4	Beak
5	Crushing teeth
6	Saw-toothed

*A hordeling has 1d3 mouths.

Torso (d6)	
1	Fat
2	Rubbery
3	Thin
4	Muscular
5	Wide
6	Short, thick

Neck (d6)	
1	Short, thick
2	Short, thin
3	Long, thick
4	Forward-thrusting, thick
5	Long, thin
6	None

Back (d6)	
1	Humped
2	Hunched
3	Knobby
4	Bristled
5	Spined
6	Wings*

*Roll a d6; 1-2, bat-like; 3-4, insectile; 5-6, feathered. A hordeling can use its wings to fly only if it gained fly as a special movement mode.

Tail (d6)*	
1	Long, prehensile
2	Short
3	Long
4	Long, clubbed
5	Forked
6	Short, prehensile

*A hordeling has 1d3 - 1 tails.

Arms (d6)*	
1	Multijointed
2	Long
3	Short, thick
4	Muscular
5	Misplaced
6	Tentacle (no hands)

*A hordeling has 1d4 arms.

Hands (d6)	
1-3	Clawed
4	Pincered
5	Spiked
6	Weapon-wielding*

*The hordeling carries a weapon, and the related attack has the weapon keyword.

Legs (d6)*	
1	Long, thin
2	Short, bowed
3	Short, massive
4	Long, muscular
5	Long, multiple joints
6	Tentacle (no feet)

*A hordeling has 1d6 - 2 legs; one that has no legs has a serpentine lower body it uses for mobility.

Feet (d6)	
1-2	Clawed
3	Hoofed
4	Prehensile
5	Suckered
6	Webbed

Skin (d6)	
1	Smooth
2	Scaly
3	Feathered
4	Furred
5	Slimy
6	Spiky

6. Flesh Out Your Hordeling

Your results should suggest ways to create a cohesive creature. Think about how the hordeling fights, particularly with its basic attacks. Does it use its claws, its horns, or its clubbed tail? If its attacks deal typed damage, how does that damage manifest? Based on its appearance and powers, how does the hordeling behave? Is it humanoid or bestial in its movement and actions? In addition to details such as these, think about the hordeling's coloration, possessions, and quirks as a way to make a truly one-of-a-kind monster.

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Tim Eagon is a freelance writer living in Madison, Wisconsin. He has written several articles, including "Ecology of the Hengeyokai," "Bestiary: Flowers in the Darkness," and "The Winterguard of Cendriane."

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Creature Incarnations: Abyssal Plague Epic Threats

By Michael E. Shea

Illustrations by Peter Tikos

A tiny breach in an ageless prison has released a disease greater than any other. A chained god infuses his will into a liquid remnant of evil inhabiting a dead demiplane. A plague of hatred and malice spreads across the multiverse, transforming simple farmers and beasts into creatures of horror and madness.

The purest essence of this malevolence—an entity known as the Voidharrow—spreads its power and consciousness across every known world. It resides in the Plaguedeep, the core of a demiplane of its own creation, protected by its most powerful followers, the exarchs and heralds of a new dark age.

As described in the Abyssal Plague Dungeons & Dragons® novel series, the spread of the plague was

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halted before the threat grew to a truly epic scale. But what if it hadn't been stopped? What if the Voidharrow had succeeded in creating a new Abyss full of its demonic servitors?

This article continues to develop ideas from the Abyssal plague monsters in *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*™ and the article "Creature Incarnations: Abyssal Plague Demons" in *Dungeon* 192. It provides suggestions for extending the threat of the plague to challenge characters with the most powerful epic-level servants of the Voidharrow—and with the Voidharrow itself—and gives you the tools to build your own alternative Abyssal plague campaign.

Abyssal Plague Knowledge

The characters might know some of the following general knowledge about the Abyssal plague.

Heal DC 29: When the curse of the Abyssal plague comes to the ordinary people of the world, they are twisted into horrible abominations and carriers of the infection. Heroes and greater beasts are transformed into powerful servants and go on to threaten entire towns. Others give themselves over to the Voidharrow willingly and undergo similarly terrible transformations, becoming blightwalkers. Only the most powerful become the Voidharrow's chosen heralds and exarchs.

Religion DC 29: The Voidharrow began as an alien substance called the Progenitor, the liquid remnant of evil inhabiting the dead universe that is the Chained God's prison. Tharizdun infused this substance with all his hatred and madness and sent it through a pinhole in his extradimensional prison, starting a plague that crossed all known worlds. Separated from the will of its creator, the Voidharrow has plans to spread its influence across the planes and into the hearts of all mortals.

Abyssal Plague Blightwalker

Powerful heroes who fail to adapt to the Voidharrow's transformation become blightwalkers—twisted husks of their former selves. They nearly burst with the plague festering inside them. Only faint memories of their former lives remain in their scourged minds. Red crystals protrude from their skin. A slick sheen covers their abscessed flesh. Jagged remnants of weapons hang from their hands. Their intelligent eyes are filled with red laced with veins of silver. The Voidharrow keeps armies of these powerful, mindless abominations around itself for protection.

Lore

Arcana or Religion DC 27: Blightwalkers overflow with the taint of the Abyssal plague. Little remains of their original minds. Dark energy issues from their gaping wounds, and a single blow against them violently unleashes the plague within.

History DC 27: Powerful heroes who fall in battle against the Voidharrow, or those foolish enough to serve it willingly, are tested by its purest essence. Those who succeed become the guardians of the Voidharrow. Those who fail become blightwalkers.

Tactics

Blightwalkers have little individual direction. Pain and hatred fill their lives, although they retain some muscle memory from their former selves. They avoid taking actions that would open them to opportunity attacks, and they seek to station themselves where they can gain combat advantage. Their leaders know the value of commanding blightwalkers into such positions right before *plagueburst* is triggered.

Abyssal Plague Blightwalker Level 23 Minion Brute
Medium elemental humanoid (demon) XP 1,275

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +18
AC 35, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 33 **Perception** +9
Speed 6
Immune necrotic, psychic

Traits

☼ **Maddening Presence** ✦ **Aura** 1
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to all defenses.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Plague Blade** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC
Hit: 19 damage.

⊗ **Mindspike** (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +26 vs. Will
Hit: 19 psychic damage.

Triggered Actions

↯ **Plagueburst** (necrotic, psychic) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The blightwalker drops to 0 hit points.
Attack (No Action): Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst); +26 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 25 necrotic and psychic damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Str 27 (+19)	**Dex** 24 (+18)	**Wis** 6 (+9)
Con 24 (+18)	**Int** 6 (+9)	**Cha** 16 (+14)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** understands Abyssal

Voidharrow Exarch

The strongest knights and warriors who pass the trials of the Voidharrow become its exarchs, commanders of its forces throughout the multiverse. They spread its will through extreme physical violence. Exarchs' bodies are horribly mutated manifestations of their previous forms. Crystalline growths permanently fuse any armor they wear to their bodies. Large blades coated in sharp red crystal are grafted to their limbs.

One exarch reigns over each region under the Voidharrow's influence. It acts as the sentient plague's champion, leading armies across blighted lands, slaughtering the weak, and harvesting stronger foes as future servants of the Voidharrow.

Lore

Arcana DC 28: This dark knight of the Voidharrow can bind enemies in the ethereal chains of Tharizdun, rip them through rifts in space, and hew them open with its jagged crystalline blade.

History DC 28: Once, this twisted monstrosity was a knight who traveled the planes seeking justice, fame, or fortune. You cannot say whether it came to the Voidharrow as an enemy or as a supplicant seeking power from the sentient blight. Now it serves the Voidharrow as champion, guardian, and protector.

Voidharrow Exarch	**Level 24 Soldier**
Medium elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 6,050
HP 225; **Bloodied** 112	**Initiative** +20
AC 40, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 36	**Perception** +18
Speed 5	
Resist 15 necrotic, 15 psychic	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Plague Blade** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one target); +29 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 21 damage, and the target grants combat advantage and has vulnerable 5 to all damage until it hits the exarch with an attack (save ends both).	
Whirling Plague Blade ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Effect: The exarch uses *plague blade* twice. If the exarch is bloodied, it uses *plague blade* three times.	
Triggered Actions	
↯ **Psychic Chains** (psychic, teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of the exarch makes an attack that doesn't include the exarch as a target.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 5 (triggering enemy); +27 vs. Will	
Hit: The exarch teleports the target to a square adjacent to itself and then uses *plague blade* against the target.	
Vengeance Strike ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An adjacent enemy shifts or willingly teleports.	
Effect (Opportunity Action): The exarch uses *plague blade* against the triggering enemy.	
Str 28 (+21) **Dex** 22 (+18) **Wis** 12 (+13)	
Con 25 (+19) **Int** 12 (+13) **Cha** 24 (+19)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Primordial	

Tactics

A Voidharrow exarch retains the tactical acumen of a powerful knight. It relies on *psychic chains* and *vengeance strike* to lock down strikers and controllers, but it gains particular pleasure from cutting down leaders. When fighting alongside the Voidharrow or one or more of its heralds, an exarch tries to pull as many enemies away from its allies as possible.

Voidharrow Herald

If exarchs are the brutal hands of the Voidharrow, the heralds are its voice. They spread the sentient plague's words of madness and hatred. Planewalking wizards and other mighty practitioners of the arcane arts are often selected to serve as the Voidharrow's heralds.

Lore

Arcana DC 29: Twisted by the influence of the Abyssal plague, this former spellcaster sacrifices its magical abilities but gains a special blade of red crystal that extends from its hand. This sword can slice through space itself, inflicting horrible wounds on distant opponents.

Tactics

A Voidharrow herald begins by spewing the vile whispers of the Voidharrow, cursing a ranged target. It then teleports near the cursed foe, preferably behind the rear ranks of an enemy party, and slices its prey from a safe distance. If pinned down, the herald teleports away from danger.

Voidharrow Herald	Level 25 Artillery
Medium elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 7,000
HP 178; **Bloodied** 89	**Initiative** +19
AC 39, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 38	**Perception** +18
Speed 6, teleport 6	Blindsight 3
Resist 15 necrotic, 15 psychic	

Traits

Plagued Blood

While the herald is bloodied, it can score a critical hit on a roll of 17-20.

Standard Actions

Plague Blade ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 10 (one target); +32 vs. AC

Hit: 3d8 + 21 damage.

Minor Actions

Voidharrow Curse (necrotic, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**

Effect: Close burst 10 (one enemy in the burst). The target is cursed (save ends). If the herald scores a critical hit against the target while it is cursed, the target takes 15 extra necrotic and psychic damage.

Triggered Actions

Cursed Pain (necrotic, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy cursed by the herald that the herald can see takes damage.

Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 15 necrotic and psychic damage, and the curse ends.

Skills Arcana +20, Insight +18

Str 16 (+15)	**Dex** 24 (+19)	**Wis** 12 (+13)
Con 22 (+18)	**Int** 16 (+15)	**Cha** 28 (+21)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Primordial

The Voidharrow

The essence of malice and destruction, the Voidharrow is a sentient disease that travels from world to world, infecting every living creature it can. Like a virus, it seeks only to replicate and spread. It has boundless ambition, like the Chained God that created it, but its will is divided between the desires of Tharizdun and the destructive purpose of the Progenitor. Although Tharizdun still seeks release and hopes to use the Voidharrow to fulfill that aim, the Progenitor's will is simply to spread the Abyssal plague.

The Voidharrow can appear in many forms, but it most often appears as a column of twisting red liquid crystal streaming with pulsing lines of silver and flecked with gold. In combat, the Voidharrow sees powerful opponents as future exarchs and heralds and surrounds itself with the mightiest of those it has converted.

As a direct creation of Tharizdun, the Voidharrow has an intellect beyond that of any mortal, with no understanding of love, compassion, revenge, or hatred. It is unlike any villain the heroes of the outer worlds might have faced. Every drip of its essence teems with a single-minded ambition to devour all life.

The Voidharrow	Level 27 Elite Controller
Huge elemental magical beast (demon, ooze)	XP 22,000
HP 500; **Bloodied** 250	**Initiative** +16
AC 41, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 41	**Perception** +21
Speed 6, teleport 6	Blindsight 3
Immune charm, fear, stunned; **Resist** 15 necrotic, 15 psychic	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

Voidharrow Whispers ✦ **Aura** 1 (3 while the Voidharrow is bloodied)

Any enemy that ends its turn in the aura gains vulnerable 15 necrotic and 15 psychic until the end of its next turn.

Ooze

While squeezing, the Voidharrow moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Standard Actions

Plague Grip (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d10 + 5 necrotic damage, and the Voidharrow grabs the target (escape DC 30). Until the grab ends, the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage.

Plague Reach (fear, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 10 (one creature); +30 vs. Will

Hit: 3d10 + 5 psychic damage, and ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends). The Voidharrow slides the target up to the target's speed.

Plague Fury ✦ **At-Will**

Effect: The Voidharrow makes two basic attacks. If the Voidharrow is bloodied, it makes three basic attacks.

Move Actions

Harrowing Grab (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**

The Voidharrow walks or teleports up to its speed, and creatures grabbed by it are pulled or teleported with it, staying grabbed in a space of the Voidharrow's choice within 3 squares of itself. The Voidharrow's movement provokes no opportunity attacks from the grabbed creatures.

Minor Actions

Mind Harrow (charm) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞

Attack: Melee 10 (one creature taking ongoing psychic damage); +30 vs. Will

Hit: As a free action, the target charges or uses an at-will attack power against an enemy of the Voidharrow's choice.

Triggered Actions

Harrowing Misdirect (charm) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied

Trigger: An enemy within 20 squares of the Voidharrow hits or misses it with a melee or a ranged attack.

Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 20 (triggering enemy in the burst); +30 vs. Will

Hit: The triggering attack is instead made against a creature of the Voidharrow's choice within the original attack's range.

Skills Arcana +26, Insight +21

Str 20 (+18)	**Dex** 16 (+16)	**Wis** 16 (+16)
Con 26 (+21)	**Int** 26 (+21)	**Cha** 29 (+22)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Primordial; telepathy 10

Lore

Arcana DC 30: The Voidharrow twists space physically and in the minds of its opponents. It slips through traps with ease and can warp the minds of its enemies, turning them against one another.

Nature DC 30: The Voidharrow has no ties to the natural world. It is a force bred from the chaos

of the deepest pits of the Abyss and fermented with the Chained God's madness. It is both fearless and immune to charm effects.

Religion DC 30: An aura of physical and mental corruption surrounds the Voidharrow and becomes more intense when the creature is bloodied. Standing in this aura could shred the sanity from your mind and the soul from your body.

Tactics

The Voidharrow uses enemies against one another, filling their minds with malice. It attempts to keep as many foes as possible within its aura without allowing itself to become completely surrounded. If the Voidharrow is surrounded, it teleports to a better position. It grabs those bold enough to confront it in melee and moves more distant targets closer or into a good position for the effect of *mind harrow*. Occasionally, it twists the mind of a ranged attacker so that the foe's shot targets another creature.

Monster Theme Powers

The Voidharrow's corruption can infect mortals. The following Abyssal plague monster theme templates can be applied to creatures afflicted by the disease.

Abyssal Plaguetouch

Beasts afflicted with the Abyssal plague often find their natural weapons coated in a strange red liquid crystal that spreads the infection further. Creatures can coat their weapons in razor-sharp crystals. The plague breaks through targets' mental and physical resistance, making them more susceptible to harm. This power best fits skirmishers, lurkers, and artillery creatures. Alternatively, the effect can be changed so that it ends when the target hits the creature. When used in this way, the power has no "first failed saving throw" effect.

Abyssal Plaguetouch ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞

Trigger: The creature hits with an at-will melee attack or an at-will ranged attack.

Effect (No Action): The target grants combat advantage and has vulnerable 5 to all damage (save ends both).

First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead dazed and has vulnerable 10 to all damage (save ends both).

Maddening Presence

Intelligent creatures overcome by the essence of the plague project the Voidharrow's malice. This whisper seeps into the minds of those nearby and begins corrupting their bodies. It sends veins of red through their skin and murmurs of a darkness so deep that no mortal can comprehend it. This power best fits mighty controllers and leaders.

☼ Maddening Presence ✦ Aura 1

Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to all defenses.

Plagueburst

The Voidharrow uses larger and more mindless creatures to spread its will in more direct ways. When a creature uses this power, all of its crystalline protrusions explode, spreading a burning, screaming red mist in the air. This power best fits brutes and soldiers. You can use this power to add environmental effects to the encounter.

✧ Plagueburst (necrotic, psychic, zone) **✦ Encounter**

Trigger: The creature drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst). Each target takes 5 necrotic and psychic damage per tier. If the creature is not a minion, the burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 necrotic and psychic damage per tier.

Shattering Plague Crystal

Some infected creatures can increase the potency of their attacks by sacrificing crystalline fragments of their own plague-ravaged bodies. This power works well with strong brute or soldier melee attackers and creatures that have natural weapons. Potentially, it can speed up combat by causing creatures to deal more damage by taking damage.

Shattering Plague Crystal (necrotic, psychic) **✦ Recharge** when first bloodied

Effect: The creature takes 1 damage per level and deals 1 extra necrotic and psychic damage per level on its next attack that hits before the end of the encounter.

Running an Abyssal Plague Campaign

Using the themes in this article, the previous Abyssal plague demons article (in *Dungeon* 192), and creatures from *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*, you can build an entire campaign around the plague or include it as a smaller thread within a larger campaign. Use the parts of the story line that fit your campaign, and modify them as needed.

Abyssal Plague Monsters

Only a handful of native Abyssal plague monsters exist. When running a campaign focused on the plague, recast existing monsters as servants and soldiers of the plague. You can accomplish much simply by describing the creatures as bursting with red crystalline formations laced with silver and flecked with gold. Dark red liquid fills their eyes and drips from their claws and mouths.

Heroic Tier: Red Shadows

It all begins when a farmer is bitten and infected by a strange beast in the woods a day's journey from Fallcrest. The characters might start the mission as envoys protecting a priest who has been sent to investigate the odd infection. As they get closer to the farmstead, they discover the family's animals dead in the fields. Some have been torn apart, and others appear to be twisted by a strange disease of the bones. Entering the farmhouse, the party discovers that every family member has been infected by the plague, their bodies twisted and malformed. The family mindlessly attacks the characters with jagged claws and broken teeth, unwilling or unable to be discouraged from trying to infect others.

During the gruesome job of dispatching the plague victims, the party notices that one of the family members has escaped the farmhouse and traveled into the woods.

In the middle of the heroic tier, the party learns more about the spread of the plague. Local lords send the characters after clans of orcs or goblins that are at war with the plague. The characters soon learn that the plague is no mere disease but contains a malevolence that seeks to devour the land. They also learn that deranged cultists worship the plague and follow a cult leader devoted to the Chained God. As the adventurers investigate, they begin to battle plague demon chaos knights and chaos vanguards (see *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*).

Toward the end of the heroic tier, the party learns more about the nature of the Abyssal plague. A cult leader sets his plans in motion, and Fallcrest comes under siege by a vicious army of plague demons. After a grueling battle defending the town, the characters hunt for the cult leader's lair in a ruined tower. There they face his strongest plague demons and the priest of the Chained God himself. In the lair, the party finds scrolls and documents describing the Abyssal plague's spread across the world.

Paragon Tier: The Plague War

The arc for the paragon tier campaign against the Abyssal plague follows the characters as they hunt down and destroy the cult and its most powerful abominations—an exarch and a herald sent by the Voidharrow. While the herald brings together and unites Tharizdun's cultists, the exarch wages war against the sentient plague's enemies.

Early in the paragon tier, various tribes of monsters heed the herald's call. They wage war against all civilizations, sending powerful, twisted beasts to spread the plague. The party must dismantle these tribes and learn more about the origin of the exarch and the herald.

In the middle of the tier, the characters travel to the Feywild to find ancient texts and lore that speak of the origin of the plague and what magic might stop it. There they chase down a small outbreak of the plague (which they might have brought with them) to ensure that it does not spread throughout the plane.

In the final adventures of the paragon tier, the characters confront the exarch and the herald directly. They face the most destructive of the plague's monsters, engines of malice and hatred that threaten entire civilizations. The tier ends with the deaths of the exarch and the herald and the revelation of the Voidharrow's plan to destroy the multiverse.

Epic Tier: Facing the Voidharrow

From their new home base in Sigil, the adventurers learn of the full spread of the Abyssal plague. They meet an organization of powerful wizards and priests who are attempting to keep the City of Doors free of the plague. This group asks the party to find cultists of Tharizdun that lurk throughout Sigil, hoping to use portals to spread the plague to thousands of worlds.

In the middle of the epic tier, the characters track down the remnants of the gods that first imprisoned Tharizdun to learn more about the plague's origin and weaknesses. To prevent the party from gaining such knowledge, the Voidharrow sends dark assassins to kill the gods or transform them into its servants. Only the characters can save them.

In the final adventures of the epic tier, the party faces the Voidharrow's strongest exarchs and heralds. After defeating those forces, the characters confront the Voidharrow in its demiplane. During this mighty battle, the party might glimpse the madness within the prison of the Chained God and see the true threat faced by the multiverse.

About the Author

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Codex of Betrayal:
Glasya, Princess of the Nine Hells

By Robert J. Schwalb

Illustrations by Brian Valenzuela

"How can I refuse her, this woman who haunts my dreams, who captures my imagination and makes me a slave to her beauty? How can I deny her the one thing she requires to give herself to me fully? What is a soul anyway? Does such a thing exist? What proof is there that we have souls? All the priests spew are lies to fill their coffers, to make of us obedient sheep, going where they lead us. I have never seen my soul, felt it, sensed its presence. For all I know, what she asks for is nothing. Yet I resist. Some part of me screams out to refuse, to turn away from the pleasure she promises and flee until I can run no farther. But where can I run that will purge my mind of her presence? What can I do to forget her caress, the brush of her fingers on my face, the hot cinnamon kiss upon my lips? Nothing. I am her slave already, and my delay is nothing more than foolish denial. My soul? She can have it. Come, Glasya, take from me what you wish, and I shall be yours forever and always!"

The Nine Hells were born from betrayal and unspeakable evil, and intrigues and treachery dominate their long and sordid history. The lords of the realms lurking below Baator's broken, smoking surface hatch plots to topple rivals, wage war against fellow lords, and snatch power before someone takes it from them. When not mounting invasions into the Abyss to plunder it of its nascent power, the ruling archdevils turn against one another. Each ruler has stepped on someone or destroyed something to gain his or her position. Among this treacherous aristocracy, none has captured the imagination as has Glasya, daughter of Asmodeus and Princess of the Nine Hells.

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Baator, world of the Nine Hells, drifts in the starry firmament as a blazing sphere where evil burns hottest. From here the devils hail, infernal legions muster, and the damned languish in eternal torment. In the distant past, this dominion was a splendid realm, a shining jewel unequaled in goodness and brightness. Now the roiling flames have all but erased the once verdant world.

A forgotten god, now recalled only as He Who Was, ruled Baator from his gleaming throne. His dominion was built on law, guided by morality, and bound to peace's cause. The god's kindness and goodwill allowed the angels in his service to rise high in his esteem, becoming archangels nearly equal in power to exarchs and demigods. Through them, He Who Was sought to spread peace and justice throughout the planes. Yet for all his great wisdom, not once did he expect betrayal's knife to come from these virtuous champions, nor did he foretell the ruination that would come to define the dominion he ruled.

The Prince of Evil

Theologians claim that a fragment of the evil that created the Abyss sent Asmodeus, once a bright and shining star in the service of his god, plummeting toward darkness. That brilliant, terrible jewel atop his scepter only tightens evil's grasp on his heart. As those versed in cosmology know, Asmodeus led the uprising against He Who Was, slew the god's protectors, and conquered the dominion. In doing so, he caused hellish fires to sweep across its surface, boiling away the glittering oceans and reducing the forests to ash and cinders. Where once beauty reigned, only death and suffering remained, and thus did Baator become the Nine Hells.

Asmodeus carved up Baator, twisted into its present, horrid form, rewarding the angels who fought under his banner with fiefdoms and realms. He bestowed on each a Hell to rule, provided that ruler remained a loyal subject. Asmodeus claimed Nessus, the dominion's fiery heart. He gifted Cania to Mephistopheles and gave Malbolge and Maladomini to Baalzebul, his truest friend and ally. Levistus gained Stygia, Belial Phlegethos; Mammon claimed Minauros, and Dispater Dis. Zariel took command of Avernus, the outermost layer of Baator, and was charged with protecting the dominion from enemies who sought vengeance against the rebellious angels. The archdevils ruled thus for many eons, harvesting the souls of the damned and gathering their power. They mounted continual incursions into the Abyss in attempts to wrest free the greatest prize of all, the black shard lodged in its bowels and the author of all the world's evils.

Evil, as always, grows. All the vices and wickedness burgeoning in the Nine Hells seeded new ambitions among the evil rulers of this dominion, and the peace won through treachery could not last. Many players were responsible for the great and disastrous drama known as the Reckoning, and nearly all suffered for their parts in it. One, however, has emerged from the strife and conflict even more powerful: the Hells' own daughter, Glasya, Princess of the Night.

Hell's Daughter

Glasya would be remarkable for her pedigree alone. With a few rare exceptions, the gods do not make a habit of sharing their power with offspring; divine children are uncommon at best. Glasya is one of those rarities. She was sired by Asmodeus on his concubine, Bensozia, once called the Queen of Hell, not long after wresting Baator from He Who Was. Bensozia was one of the dead god's brides, so to Asmodeus it was only fitting to claim her for his own.

Many have questioned why the Prince of Evil would create a liability in producing a child. The reason becomes clear when one considers that Asmodeus is as much a prisoner of Baator as he is its ruler. Slaying a god has consequences, and the destruction of He Who Was so enraged the other deities that they sealed Asmodeus and all the rebel angels who aided him in his stolen dominion. Asmodeus believed his offspring would not be subject to the same restrictions and, with proper training, could act as his proxy in the planes.

What Asmodeus did not anticipate was the depth of Bensozia's hatred for him. He had taken her as a prize, used her, and then discarded her. As resentment and hatred poisoned her soul, Bensozia plotted her master's downfall almost from the beginning. Since she could not equal Asmodeus's power, she contented herself with fostering treachery against him throughout the Nine Hells. Like Asmodeus, Bensozia saw in her daughter the vehicle for her vengeance and believed that in time Glasya would be able to do what she herself could not: destroy the Prince of Evil. And so Bensozia nursed her child on poison and hate, taught her the arts of seduction and intrigue, and filled her empty vessel with murderous intent.

Murder or Matricide?

The archdevils have no authority in the Nine Hells beyond that which Asmodeus grants them. In exchange for their realms, the Dark Lord demands loyalty and utter obedience. Every one has sworn oaths of fealty and goes to great lengths to demonstrate devotion. This devotion is a lie, of course; each archdevil would gladly claim the Lord of the Ninth's ruby rod and divinity for themselves. At various times, certain fiends have tried to oust Asmodeus. All have failed, earning only agony, disgrace, and sometimes death for their efforts. One of the first to try was the archdevil Levistus.

The Lord of the Fifth had proven an able and cunning ally in Baator's conquest. His charm and competence landed him mastery over Stygia, the last sea in the Nine Hells. Levistus had ambitions beyond his realm, though, and had already begun plotting against Asmodeus. The route to Asmodeus's defeat, he believed, lay through his consort, whom Levistus was certain knew the Prince of Evil's weaknesses. By

this time, Bensozia had gained esteem and enough trust from Asmodeus to be sent to inspect the other Hells along with his constable, Martinet, and several pit fiends. The story goes that Levistus approached Bensozia as she traveled through Stygia and offered to make her his queen in exchange for helping him overthrow her master. According to the tale, she was true to Asmodeus and refused the offer. For this defiance, she and all her pit fiends were slain, with only Martinet escaping.

This story is commonly told throughout the Nine Hells, but it is almost certainly propaganda. Bensozia hated Asmodeus. She would never have sacrificed her life out of loyalty to him. If she did in fact refuse Levistus's offer, she must have done so for some other reason. Another tale, whispered far from listening ears, recounts a much different version of events. Bensozia saw in Levistus another chance to weaken Asmodeus, and the two had been allies for many years. She traveled to Stygia when she could and whispered secrets to the Lord of the Fifth to give him any advantage possible. Those who tell this story do not believe that anything close to love existed between these conspirators; each sought to exploit the other for dark purposes. Despite their duplicity, the two managed to keep their tryst going for some time—until Glasya discovered them.

Levistus, always the dashing scoundrel and rake, stole Glasya's heart during one of his visits to Asmodeus's court. Levistus recognized that she might turn even more of Asmodeus's household against him, and the two became secret lovers. He knew that he was taking a great risk in doing so: Glasya was young and jealous, and would react violently should she discover his ongoing affair with Bensozia. Similarly, the Queen of Hell would be enraged by Levistus's dalliance with her daughter. Yet he maintained the ruse for as long as he could.

Willful and disobedient, Glasya clashed repeatedly with her father. After another such fight, she fled to Stygia to become Levistus's open consort—only to find her mother in her lover's arms. Glasya already hated Bensozia, but this betrayal drove her to murder. While her mother's palanquin made its way back to Nessus, Glasya slipped inside and cut Bensozia's throat.

The pit fiend Martinet, also called the Voice of Nessus, was the first to discover the murder. Asmodeus had tasked him with enforcing order on the Nine Hells; not wanting his master to appear weak through his daughter's rash action, Martinet pinned the murder on Levistus. He destroyed the rest of the pit fiends with the party so no other witnesses remained. Though Asmodeus did not love Bensozia, he could not let the offense go unpunished. He stripped Levistus of his titles, sealed him in ice, and granted Stygia to Geryon, the Wild Beast. Following Martinet's advice, Asmodeus also sent Glasya away and installed her in Mammon's court to be the archdevil's concubine.

To Start a War

Whether or not she is to blame for her mother's death, Glasya regarded her concubinage to the Lord of Avarice as a punishment. She had grown accustomed to the wealth and comforts of her father's realm and was not prepared for the squalor and filth pervading Mammon's wretched backwater. Minauros promised only sickness and despair, and succumbing to the realm's toxic influence would be oblivion. This situation intensified Glasya's hatred for her father, planted by her mother, until the thought of subjugating Asmodeus consumed her. Her position as consort to a lesser archdevil afforded her few opportunities to rise in station, so she started manipulating events to suit her purpose: replacing her father as Queen of the Nine Hells. Too many archdevils stood between her and her ultimate prize, though. Any of them would welcome the opportunity to weaken or replace Asmodeus, but most were reluctant to upset the delicate balance of power in the Nine Hells and risk losing their positions in the hierarchy. They needed only look to Levistus's fate to see what would befall them if they tried. No single archdevil would move against Asmodeus, but if she could convince several to join forces, they might succeed where individuals had failed.

Focalor, Mammon's seneschal and the true power in Minauros, proved a ready informant for Glasya. He resented the foolish and cowardly Mammon, who indulged his hedonistic impulses and tormented the lesser creatures populating his realm, leaving its security and administrative duties to fall on his seneschal's shoulders. Glasya appealed to Focalor's bitterness by promising to help him destroy his master, and thereby won a powerful protector as well as a reliable source of information about the dominion's political landscape. She already knew that Asmodeus favored Baalzebul and could depend on him to be a powerful ally, while Mephistopheles and Baalzebul despised each other and had clashed several times in the past. Asmodeus had gifted Malbolge to Baalzebul long ago as a reward for some despicable service, and the Lord of the Flies allowed the archdevil Moloch to rule it in his name.

A tangled web of alliances held the archdevils together, and all Glasya had to do was tug on one strand to upset the peace. At her urging, Focalor convinced Mammon that Baalzebul was secretly amassing an army to invade Cania, the Seventh Hell. The Lord of the Third wrestled with this revelation but eventually came to the conclusion that he should inform Mephistopheles. Meanwhile, Glasya traveled to Malbolge and recruited Malagard, a powerful night hag and Moloch's leman, to her cause. Through her, Glasya fed information to Moloch that Mephistopheles was preparing to invade Malbolge.

Moloch reported the rumors to Baalzebul, who started massing his armies in response. Mammon warned Mephistopheles of the impending invasion, and Baalzebul's growing armies confirmed the reports. All was as Glasya had hoped. The Nine

Hells broke into two factions, with Zariel, Baalzebul, Moloch, and Belial on one side, and Mephistopheles, Mammon, and Dispater on the other. Both sides raised armies. Both sides argued and postured, but neither would make the first move. Glasya realized a greater push was needed to nudge them to war, and she knew just how to accomplish this.

Naome, Belial's consort, had spoken out against Glasya's plotting and warned Belial to avoid the building tension lest he anger the Prince of Evil. Belial was on the verge of trying to broker peace between the two factions and had convinced Asmodeus to resume the Blood War with a new invasion into the Abyss, since doing so would unite the marshaled forces against a common enemy. Before the armies could invade the Abyss, though, Glasya crept into Phlegethos and murdered Naome. Enraged, Belial commanded Zariel to turn her armies against Dispater and lay siege to Dis. Belial's forces joined those of Baalzebul and Moloch to attack Stygia, hoping to crush Geryon and sweep into Cania before Mephistopheles could mount a successful counterattack.

The Reckoning

The war for the Nine Hells raged for an eon. Baalzebul's invasion seemed a resounding success at first, but Mephistopheles was cunning. He sacrificed a legion of devils to maneuver around the enemy forces and invade Maladomini. With Mephistopheles's armies spilling into his realm, Baalzebul recalled his forces from Stygia, where they had suffered terrible casualties at the ice devils' hands. This retreat freed Mammon to help lift the siege at Dis by striking Zariel from behind. Zariel's forces broke and fled to Avernus. Dispater and Mammon, now united, converged on Maladomini to destroy Baalzebul and then turn their attention to Nessus and the Prince of Lies.

What none of the archdevils realized was Asmodeus had been aware of the plot from the beginning. After positioning Geryon in Cania to protect it from invasion, he joined Mephistopheles in the attack against Baalzebul. Once all was in place, Geryon sounded his horn, signaling Asmodeus's other agents to spring the trap. The Dark Eight, pit fiend generals who each led an archdevil's armies, turned on their masters and brought the war to an abrupt close.

Scholars have theorized that Glasya was also Asmodeus's agent in the Reckoning, and that her task was to expose the treachery of the archdevils and to help consolidate Asmodeus's power. If that story is true, the plan worked admirably. The eight generals were given command over all the legions of Baator and assigned to the dominion's defenses in Avernus. There, they hunted down and imprisoned Zariel. Another pit fiend, Bel, was raised up to as a puppet ruler over her realm.

Mephistopheles and Dispater, who had intended to take the war to Asmodeus's door, emerged from the Reckoning shamed and weakened, but with all their holdings intact. Dispater, though, has refused to emerge from his iron citadel since the faction's defeat. Mammon, who was first to flee the battlefield, earned only disgrace and distrust from all his peers. Thus diminished, he would never again raise arms against the Prince of Evil.

Strangely, though, Asmodeus's allies suffered the worst. Belial stepped down as archdevil and gave the throne of Phlegethos to his daughter Fierna. Baalzebul, who had once prided himself in his beauty, became a loathsome sluglike creature doomed to suffer for eternity. For his duplicity, Geryon was cast out from the Nine Hells and replaced by Levistus, who now rules Stygia from his icy prison. Moloch, goaded by Malagard to remain defiant to the end, was also exiled. His former consort claimed his titles, becoming the Hag Countess of Malbolge.

Glasya did not escape the Reckoning unscathed. Asmodeus named her Queen of the Erinyes, a title that suggested honor but actually made her subject to the Dark Eight, who could watch over her and report her intrigues to the Prince of Evil. In effect, Asmodeus neutralized her and put her as far from him as he could.

Glasya's Redemption

What Glasya did not realize was that her new position as Queen of the Erinyes protected her from the archdevils who had, by then, learned of her hand in the events leading up to the Reckoning. Nearly all wanted a chance for revenge, but none dared move against her while she was in the Dark Eight's shadows. Furthermore, her position gave her the opportunity to put her diplomatic skills to good use, and she recruited a small army of devils to aid her should she have a chance to expand her power. That chance was not long in coming.

Malagard was not content with Moloch's leavings. She craved more and more power and influence in the Nine Hells until she became a troubling presence for her rival archdevils. The Hag Countess spent the next several years amassing souls for a ritual to transform herself into a god. Something went wrong, however, perhaps due to Geryon's meddling. Malagard grew and swelled, becoming a bloated and ever-expanding horror until her body finally split open, releasing a torrent of filth to wash across the realm.

This was Glasya's chance to move. With the Hag Countess out of the way, she and her forces swept into Malbolge unchallenged. There she named herself Lord of the Sixth. No other archdevil has dared to challenge her, though their hatred for her remains. Asmodeus even gave his blessing by confirming her title. Some now believe Malagard was never intended to be anything more than a seat-warmer, a figurehead to hold the realm until Glasya was ready to claim it. With the Dark Eight holding the leash to Hells' legions, the other archdevils lacked the strength to mount an invasion, and none would risk another Reckoning to take Malbolge. Thus Glasya claimed her birthright and is poised to become one of the most powerful Lords of the Nine Hells.

Glasya Today

Glasya has emerged from her mother's shadow, helped spark a war whose repercussions can still be felt in the Nine Hells, and fallen from power only to rise once more to claim a Hell. What might she do next? The other archdevils have no doubt Glasya will one day expand her influence to conquer even more territory, though whom she might target is anyone's guess.

Those closest to Glasya describe her as being obsessed with Levistus. She swings from pining misery to blind hatred, moving from one extreme to the other with little warning. Glasya has made no secret of her intent to carve out Levistus's heart and devour it. The only reason she has yet to do so is because her father has forbidden it. Many consider her outspoken opposition to Levistus as nothing more than posturing: Asmodeus would block her effort, and the Lord of Stygia is not unprotected.

Another development troubling the infernal aristocracy is Glasya's curious relationship with Fierna, the current Lord of Phlegethos. Most of the archdevils suspect that Glasya was responsible for Naome's murder, and those rumors have surely reached Fierna's ears. If so, they must not bother her, since she and Glasya have been close since before Malbolge changed hands. Somehow, Glasya has driven a wedge between Fierna and her father, Belial, and the old archdevil has lost much influence over his daughter. It cannot be long before Fierna sends him away to join the rest of the fallen fiend lords haunting the ruins of Avernus.

Unlike the other lords, Glasya is not overly interested in affairs beyond the Nine Hells but keeps her focus on the dominion's political developments. She continues to be one of the greatest schemers and manipulators of all the archdevils, even though Malbolge is the smallest and least populated of the Hells. She maintains a strong rapport with the Dark Eight, and rumors suggest that she has won over a few of the pit fiends to her side. If war should break out between Glasya and her father—an eventuality all expect—her machinations might split the Eight. No ones how many pit fiends are truly loyal to her and how many pretend to be while feeding Asmodeus information about her overtures.

The other archdevils loathe Glasya and blame her for their fall in the Reckoning. Baalzebul holds her in special contempt, and assassin devils infiltrating her realm more often than not belong to him. Mammon, her former lover, remains bitter at her manipulation and would gladly repay her for the damage done to his reputation and standing. No archdevil, aside from Fierna, is friendly to her, yet none dares incur her father's wrath.

Lore

Since Glasya wrested control over Malbolge from the late Hag Countess, she has transformed that realm into a place of both striking beauty and horrific evil. Everything about her realm reflects the darkness in her mind, the corruption staining her soul, and her twisted outlook on the world. As vile as she is lovely, Glasya has proven time and again her willingness to do whatever she must to gain power.

Religion DC 41: Nearly all that is known about Glasya sources from rumor and speculation. The Hells' Princess maintained secrecy throughout her rise to power, despite spies and enemies on all sides, and now that she has achieved the title she craved for so long, she has become even more tight-lipped. Her secrecy has only fed speculation's fires about her future plans.

The strangest development in Glasya's position since taking Malbolge is the unexpected alliance she forged with Fierna of Phlegethos. The connection might be something as simple as the two being relative newcomers to Nine Hells politics, but more likely, Glasya intends to use Fierna to shore up her own forces when she finally moves against Stygia.

Glasya keeps her plans to herself, but she has made no secret of her wish to kill Levistus. Her stated reason is to avenge her mother—a mother she herself might have killed. Glasya has not the power to mount a full-scale invasion of Stygia nor the support of the Dark Eight, which only reinforces the idea she's making overtures to Phlegethos to gain Fierna's aid for an eventual attack.

Glasya in Combat

Surviving the Reckoning and the intrigues still troubling the Nine Hells requires cunning and guile, assets Glasya has in abundance. She owes her continued existence to her ability to deflect suspicion onto others and insulate herself from reprisals by letting her allies take the fall. In almost every case, her victims willingly sacrifice themselves. Now ensconced in Malbolge, Glasya has not altered her behavior, other than to more openly indulge her twisted desires. She surrounds herself with powerful servants, all in her thrall and more than willing to die to ensure that she lives.

Glasya avoids direct confrontation. She sees little use or value in exposing herself to unnecessary risks. Should enemies threaten her, she flees by the quickest available route while her underlings keep her foes busy. She always tries to talk her way out of a situation, using seduction, deception, or even truth if doing so would win over new allies to her cause. Glasya prefers to make powerful friends, not more enemies.

If the situation does not allow escape, Glasya can evoke sympathy and devotion in even those hearts turned against her in combat. She maneuvers her servants to keep enemies back while she attempts to beguile the opponent she senses will be most useful—often a spellcaster or tough warrior. Once so conscripted, her thrall protects the archdevil while she maneuvers around the battlefield's edges, striking with her poisoned blade or befuddling her enemies.

Glasya, Princess of the Nine Hells **Level 29 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) XP 30,000

HP 526; **Bloodied** 263 **Initiative** +21
AC 43, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 43 **Perception** +27
Speed 8, fly 8 Darkvision
Resist 20 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Intoxicating Presence (charm) ✦ **Aura** 3
Each enemy in the aura takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls it makes during another creature's turn, and such attacks deal only half damage.

Infernal Resolve (teleportation)
At the start of her turn, Glasya can make a saving throw against each dazing, stunning, or dominating effect on her, including those a save cannot normally end. If she saves, the effect immediately ends. On the first failed saving throw each round, Glasya teleports up to 5 squares.

Standard Actions

Nettle (poison, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +34 vs. AC
Hit: 4d6 + 7 damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 poison damage and is affected by *intoxicating presence* (save ends both).

Vile Embrace (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: Glasya must not be grabbing a creature.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage plus 3d10 + 11 psychic damage, and Glasya grabs the target (escape DC 31).

Glare of Displeasure (charm, psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature affected by *intoxicating presence*); +32 vs. Will
Hit: The target falls unconscious (save ends). Until this effect ends, the target must make a death saving throw as the first saving throw at the end of each of its turns. Three failures lead to death, as normal.
Miss: 30 psychic damage.

Word of Dismissal (fear) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in the burst); +32 vs. Will
Hit: The target must move up to its speed as a free action, ending the move as far from Glasya as possible.
Miss: The target must move up to half its speed as a free action, ending the move as far from Glasya as possible.

Move Actions

Infernal Transport (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Ranged 5 (one ally or one creature dominated by Glasya); Glasya teleports the target up to 5 squares, and the target uses an at-will attack power as a free action against a creature of Glasya's choice. The target has combat advantage for this attack.

Irresistible Embrace (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Glasya teleports up to 5 squares, teleporting any creature she is grabbing to a square adjacent to her.

Minor Actions

Demand Obedience (charm, psychic) ✦ **Recharge** when Glasya has no creature dominated
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by Glasya); +32 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).
Each Failed Saving Throw: The target takes 15 psychic damage.

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Glasya alters her physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until she uses *change shape* again or until she drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, Glasya must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 45 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.

Triggered Actions

Dutiful Thrall (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An attack hits Glasya while she is within 5 squares of an ally or a creature dominated by her.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 5 (one ally or one creature dominated by Glasya); Glasya and the target teleport to swap positions. The target is then hit by the triggering attack.

Skills Bluff +30, Diplomacy +30, Insight +27
Str 21 (+19) **Dex** 25 (+21) **Wis** 27 (+22)
Con 23 (+20) **Int** 27 (+22) **Cha** 32 (+25)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal
Equipment leather armor, short sword (*Nettle*)

Encounters

Those seeking out Glasya have the best chance at finding her in her realm, Malbolge. The beautiful and alien vistas here conceal venomous threats. Infernal vermin scuttle in gardens' shadows. The fruit hanging from flowering trees might explode, showering passersby with caustic juices. Twisted devils hunker in the darkness, freaks and castoffs transformed by the Princess's displeasure.

Glasya spends much of her time roaming her gardens or reclining in the luxury of her palace, Osseia, a grand structure lavishly furnished with the finest treasures the Nine Hells have to offer. Here she addresses petitioners in her audience chamber, while brazen devils and malebranches stand watch to ensure their mistress's safety. Also in attendance are the erinyes whom Glasya once commanded, as well as succubi, mortal thralls, and damned who have caught her eye. Barbed devils, bone devils, cambions, chain devils, and other fiends also roam the Sixth Hell.

Malbolge

Each Hell adopts the characteristics and nature of the archdevil charged with ruling it. Malbolge's control has changed hands many times over the eons since Asmodeus wrested the dominion from He Who Was. Its present form bears little resemblance to what it used to be.

Long ago, when Moloch ruled, Malbolge was a shifting landscape of broken black rock floating atop a fiery sea. Here and there rose great bronze citadels where Moloch would keep his prisoners and indulge his every wicked vice. Travel through this Hell required climbing across a steep, unstable surface, where any misstep could mean a tumble into a pit filled with razor-sharp obsidian shards. Bubbles in the lava released noxious clouds of gray-green gas that killed anyone who breathed their vapors.

Malagard changed Malbolge somewhat. Although rocks still tumbled and shook, and shards rose

from below the surface, the lava gradually cooled, cracked, and eventually stilled. The noxious gases gathered overhead to form a leprous firmament that rained burning droplets across the blighted realm. Those who roamed the place could sometimes hear cries and laughter issuing from under the rocks, as of someone or something trapped below. After the Hag Countess's foolish attempt to achieve apotheosis failed, her bloated, rotting corpse spread across the entire Hell.

On seizing Malbolge, Glasya used Malagard's remains to remake the realm into something that suited her aesthetic vision. Now it is a place of stark contrasts, of aching beauty juxtaposed with horrific ugliness. From the Hag Countess's bones she raised a great palace. In the corrupted flesh, she planted lovely gardens. The damned souls enslaved to her predecessor became subjects for her experiments. Some she made so beautiful that to look upon them was to be forever in their thrall; others she reduced to hideous, twisted forms, mockeries of flesh trapped in eternal torment. All stands on decay's brink, flesh waxen, plants bloated and oozing—even the rock is crumbling. The entrancing atmosphere is illusion, betrayed by the faint scent of rot that permeates the Hell.

Osseia, Palace of Glasya

The seat of Glasya's power, Osseia rises above the perfumed gardens atop a rounded hill adorned with erotic statues and decorative but deadly poisonous plants. The baroque palace gleams white in the dim light, archways and nooks holding unnerving sculptures, long passages filled with haunting music. In scores of rooms, halls, and secret chambers, the Lord of the Sixth and her lackeys torment the lost souls trapped here.

What at a distance looks to be white stone reveals itself as something sinister on close inspection. Fused bones, some from Malagard's corpse, others from devils who displeased Glasya, are the materials from which the palace was built. The gleaming white throne room sits inside the Hag Countess's hollow skull; twin staircases wind up to the high dais where Glasya holds court.

Garden of Delights: Somewhere near the palace's center, tucked behind high walls made from bleached skulls, stands a breathtaking garden. This beautiful, expansive place is filled with plant species from across the planes. Perfumes issuing from the riotous flowers mingle to soothe visitors and chase away their fears. The garden is the only safe place in the palace. No monsters lurk in its shadows and its flora are not overly dangerous. It is a refuge from pain and torment, a place of respite. Glasya and her succubi bring guests and prisoners here to put them at ease just long enough to make their renewed agonies all the more shocking.

Forest of Sighs

Legend holds the trees making up the Forest of Sighs were once Malagard's hair. They certainly do not resemble any species found elsewhere. Each is a black, twisted, spiny thing, oozing filth from the fissures in its trunk. Here is where many of Glasya's victims end up. When the archdevil tires of her playthings, her servants whisk them away and impale them on the trees' branches. Even Death dares not walk beneath the cruel boughs, and victims might linger for decades before they rot away. The trees are believed to feed on their souls, spreading tiny shoots

TARTACH

After Moloch fell from power, most of the dukes and other powerful archdevils fled Malbolge since they were loyal to Baalzebul. Lilith, Bethage, and others abandoned Malagard and returned to their master's court. The Hag Countess's death and Glasya's ascent have done nothing to change their minds, so Malbolge has few figures of note in Glasya's employ. This fact troubles Glasya not at all, for she has gained the inestimable service of Tartach, Moloch's former legate and duke of the Hells.

Tartach, sometimes called Tartash, has a sinister reputation. He was never a constant or true supporter of Moloch and was even less faithful to the archdevil's successor. He made no effort to protect Moloch from Malagard's influence, nor did he counsel the Hag Countess against her unwise transformation. To every archdevil who has ruled here, he has presented a loyal front, always supporting the Lord of the Sixth, if only in word.

Tartach's disloyalty stemmed from resentment: Throughout the Nine Hells, figures he saw as less worthy than he held positions of greater importance and power. Glasya, however, has changed his position somewhat. In her, he sees a chance to gain real and lasting power. He fully believes she will one day topple Asmodeus and has pledged his loyalty to her, severing all ties to Baalzebul at great risk to himself. In exchange, Glasya has entrusted Tartach with a great deal of power and draws on his wisdom and experience to guide her continued ascent.

Tartach is a massive devil, roughly human in appearance, with fiery orange-red skin and golden hair. He sports a beard and mustache; hooked horns sprout from his head. His human characteristics end at his lower body, which has a lion's hind legs and paws. He often wears black robes and carries a flaming sword.

throughout each victim's body and pumping it full of nutrients to keep it alive until the soul is thoroughly consumed.

The Innards

Glasya's influence and magic reshaped Malbolge's surface, but this verdant yet disturbing landscape conceals what came before. Beneath the soft soil and tangled roots lies a sprawling tangle of tunnels formed by gaps in the jagged boulders that once covered the surface. Malagard's rotting bulk dripped into this subterranean realm, gathering into fetid, foul-smelling pools that spawn horrors beyond description. Devils—both those loyal to Glasya and others—wander these passages, hunting the damned and each other for sport. In the deepest reaches, according to rumor, is an ancient ruined citadel of the angels who remained loyal to He Who Was. There, trapped beneath a mountain of rock, they have been driven mad, twisted into something that is neither angel nor devil but something else entirely.

Birthing Pits

Mortal souls consigned to the Nine Hells face unspeakable torments, their existence an unending march of horror, pain, and suffering. Each archdevil claims the souls of the recently dead who bargained with these fiends or were stolen from the Shadowfell by night hags and then sold to the devils. In Malbolge, these damned find all manner of dreadful ends. Some dangle in the Forest of Sighs or become playthings for Glasya, but most are marched to the Birthing Pits. Here, pain devils push them into fetid pools filled with wriggling larvae that chew and tear at screaming victims until they devour every last scrap of soul substance. Within hours of receiving a soul, a pool expels a shuffling mass of soggy flesh called a lemure. After this minor devil's form stabilizes, it eventually grows into one of the larger and more dangerous fiends populating the Nine Hells.

Malbolge holds several birthing pits, but most are hidden from view by thick forests. Not even Glasya can bear to look at the wretched lemures or tolerate their mewling cries.

The Knives

The new wilderness spreading across Malbolge covers much of the realm, but not all. Along the edges, where the writhing grasses and poisoned nettles can reach no further, Malbolge's former surface still shows through in jagged obsidian shards. These towering monoliths, called the Knives, lean against each other to form passages or jut out in great sheets. They look stable enough, but walking across them reveals the lie: Their foundations shift with no warning, dropping travelers into razor-lined pits that slice flesh and sever limbs. The Knives form a ring around Malbolge, extending about a mile across and ending at the realm's outer wall, where vast tunnels lead to the adjoining realms.

Slag, the Final Fortress

In Moloch's day, Malbolge boasted thirteen bronze fortresses, each one set aside for a different cruelty. The war for the Nine Hells saw many of them sacked and ruined, and the Hag Countess allowed the remaining strongholds to fall into disrepair. Only one citadel remains, a great half-melted structure known as Slag.

Glasya has not only tolerated Slag's presence but encourages her servants to keep it standing as a reminder of what was once here and what she had to overcome. Moloch used this citadel to dip his victims in molten gold. After drawing their screaming bodies from the vats, he set them into niches so he could look upon their pain trapped in the precious metal. Evidence of his pleasure remains; walking through the fortress's gallery reveals several hundred creatures whose final agonizing moments have been preserved in gold forever. Many whisper that Moloch lies imprisoned somewhere under this stronghold, perhaps encased in a prison similar to those of his victims.

The Ten Towers

Ten crooked towers rise up in a circle around Osseia. According to legend, each was once one of the Hag Countess's fingers. Now they are guard posts and roots for the erinyes who watch over Malbolge.

Glasya set one of these aside, calling it the Tower of Pain. In it, her most dangerous enemies linger for eons in excruciating torment. The lower levels imprison minor foes who have crossed Glasya in the past—including many adventurers—but who are too dangerous for her to keep within her palace. In the uppermost chamber, Glasya inters what remains of the Hag Countess's inner circle, the advisors and sycophants who served the old ruler until her death. Among them is Malagard's monstrous steed, a nightmare whose terrible screams issue from the tower still.

Glasya in the World

Devil-worship has few apologists in the natural world. One only has to look at the ruins of Bael Turath, and see the corruption that yet stains the tieflings, to understand what doom lies in wait for those who align themselves with the Nine Hells. Yet for all the perils inherent in such practices, there seems no shortage of fools and lunatics eager to offer up their most priceless possession in exchange for some fleeting material gain. The devils do not want devotees. They do not want worshipers. They want souls—as many as they can get.

The mortal soul has power. The Raven Queen, if the old tales can be believed, managed to defeat Nerull by wielding energy drawn from the souls trapped in Pluton. The archdevils and other members of the infernal aristocracy covet this power and go to great lengths to secure it. All devils profit

from harvesting souls; the proof is in their growing strength, their influence over the Nine Hells, and the dark magic they wield. The reasons for doing so depend on the individual. Mephistopheles, for example, requires souls to create hellfire. Baalzebul hoards them to complete a ritual to free himself from his sluglike form. What, then, does Glasya desire?

Since long before she conquered Malbolge, the Princess of the Nine Hells has enjoyed a large following of mortals. Although her power does not equal that of the archdevils, her mortal devotees outnumber those of every other duke and lord of the Hells. Glasya's appeal stems from her position as a renegade within the infernal aristocracy, an outsider who managed to triumph despite the myriad enemies surrounding her. Mortals who feel oppressed or trapped in unbearable familial, social, or cultural situations see in Glasya a way to survive. She represents a way to rebel against tradition and rise above it. Her most ardent followers come from the downtrodden, the persecuted, and the exploited. Thus, Glasya's cults take root in civilized lands where order and custom come first. Such an idea seems at odds with the devils' oppressive nature, but Glasya has never been one to do what was expected of her. She and her followers live outside the infernal climate and forge their own path.

Followers

As with most people who bargain with devils, Glasya's mortal servants favor isolation and secrecy over elaborate organizations: Large groups attract the attention of witch hunters and other zealots. As a result, Glasya's followers hide their allegiance and mask their devotion with some other kind of religious affiliation. Many of her worshipers might profess devotion to Corellon, Sehanine, or Ioun, all the while secretly working on Glasya's behalf.

As with any archdevil, Glasya bargains with mortals for their souls, usually through succubi or some other infernal intermediaries. Often the deal is for some minor gain in the form of wealth, love, or fame. Once the bargain is struck, Glasya honors her part by giving the mortal the means to secure the desired object through his or her own efforts. Doing so almost always entails some terrible risk or consequence, a danger that typically speeds the mortal to death and that soul to the Nine Hells.

Cunning and talented mortals forge a pact with Glasya for access to arcane might in exchange for some future payment. Glasya does not often make these pacts unless her mortal servant promises to send more souls to fill her coffers. Her warlocks employ a wide range of infernal-themed spells; many also master spells that manipulate, coerce, and deceive other creatures.

Cults

The true number of cults dedicated to Glasya is anyone's guess. They gather only in secure locations where they can conduct their blasphemous ceremonies without drawing the notice of the authorities. Many cults thrive far from civilization's centers, since the gods have less influence in these remote areas and the primal spirits and their devotees are not inclined to interfere. In fact, some Glasya cults incorporate dark spirits in their practices.

The most infamous coven to trouble the world was the Daughters of the Blackest Night. An infernal warlock named Ereae founded the group for the sole purpose of growing her power to contest Asmodeus's reign over the Nine Hells. Glasya found her intentions amusing. Before Asmodeus's inquisitors rooted them out and destroyed them, the cultists recorded their wicked spells in a foul tome known as the *Blasphemous Libram*, a rare volume sought the world over by those interested on the occult and forbidden. For more information on the Daughters and the *Blasphemous Libram*, see "Class Acts: Warlocks—Secrets of the Blackest Night" in *Dragon* 382.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb has designed or developed nearly two hundred roleplaying game titles for various publishers. Some of his more recent work for Wizards of the Coast can be found in The Book of Vile Darkness, Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow, and his first novel, Death Mark. For more information about Robert, be sure to check out his website at www.robertjschwalb.com or follow him on Twitter (@rjschwalb).

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Tile Trek:
A Knight in Shadowghast Manor

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 5–7

By Ken Hart

Illustration by Brian Valenzuela

Introduction

A corrupted paladin, responsible for murder and havoc across the region, returns to his ancestral home to conduct a necromantic ritual. Adventurers must assault the haunted manor, overcome its guards and hazards, and prevent the blackguard from enslaving the tortured spirits of his ancestors.

"A Knight in Shadowghast Manor" is designed for use with the *Shadowghast Manor™ Dungeon Tiles* set. The accompanying map illustrations are from that tile set, although you can run this adventure with your own versions of these maps.

You can change the names of places, the personalities involved, and details of the Shadowghast family history to suit your needs.

Background

The name of the Shadowghast clan was once revered. Now it is reviled. The Shadowghast family members had included the area's noblest warriors and paladins, many of whom earned accolades and knighthood for their heroics. Over a hundred years ago, young Orobius Shadowghast, who lacked the physical prowess of his more acclaimed siblings, made a pact with fiendish entities to obtain through sorcery the prestige that he could not gain through swordsmanship.

The devils with which the reckless Orobius bartered had long been awaiting a chance to seek vengeance on the family that had ruined many of their earthly schemes. Orobius did become the hero of his dreams, and he was even knighted for his arcane service to the land. As he grew dependent on his dark abilities, his devilish patrons changed the terms of the pact, however. To hold onto his powers, Orobius had to deceive, corrupt, or seduce other Shadowghasts into serving evil.

He succeeded. Several years later, corrupted members of the family left Shadowghast Manor and recruited a small army from the ranks of disgraced warriors, amoral thugs, and duergar residing in the nearby crags. From there, they began a campaign of terror. Likewise, other Shadowghasts who had followed a religious path soon spat on the family's honor, conducting blasphemous acts and speaking heresy.

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The resulting turmoil inspired tales of horror for miles around, delighting the devils and bringing shame upon those who still lived in Shadowghast Manor, including Orobius. Sadistically, his patrons made him fully aware of each crime committed by the siblings and cousins whose souls he had helped to corrupt. He realized with dread that the Shadowghasts and their heirs were forever cursed.

Orobius retained his arcane powers, but he never again left the manor, and those few relatives who also stayed spent what was left of the Shadowghast fortune on reparations for the victims of their nefarious kin and on fortifications to the crypts beneath the manor. They feared that vengeful people or, worse, evil Shadowghasts would one day seek to corrupt or disturb the final rest of their honored ancestors.

Orobius spent his final years in misery, despite the fact that he had been forgiven by the family members who remained. When he died, the last virtuous members of the family interred his body in the crypts, and then, nearly destitute, they left their home and faded into obscurity. Shadowghast Manor has been unoccupied since, and haunting reports of ghosts and shadowy creatures have guaranteed that only the foolish ever venture near it.

Until now. The clan's current standard bearer in matters of corruption is Arturas Shadowghast, a charismatic blackguard in the service of Asmodeus. After tormenting a neighboring region for years with daring attacks on temples and arcane libraries, Arturas and his small band came under assault from various militias. So, he led a retreat to his long-abandoned ancestral home. His weary pursuers have tracked Arturas to Shadowghast Manor, yet they lack the strength or the confidence to engage his band in a frontal assault.

Has Arturas truly been cornered, though? It has become apparent to the local authorities that in all likelihood Arturas's "retreat" was intentional. Perhaps there is something inside Shadowghast Manor that he wants. Adventurers must answer the call to finish the job and bring Arturas Shadowghast out of the manor, dead or alive.

The blackguard and his succubus ally, Lyrane, have negated the protective wards placed by his ancestors and are now busily preparing a dark ritual in the crypts below. A keen student of shadow magic and necromancy, Arturas has become convinced that by summoning the spirits of Orobius and other of his ancestors, he can place them under his command as wraiths and then absorb their mystical power. His other allies are on alert in the manor proper, ready to kill anyone who tries to interfere with their leader's plan. Arturas also has reset some of the manor's original traps.

Much of the manor's second floor has disintegrated, either from age or the fiery attacks of bitter townspeople. The main floor's northeastern entrance, through which Arturas's group violently entered, has been boarded up, as have most of the windows. The invaders haven't yet barricaded the southwestern entrance, largely because some of Arturas's lackeys have been more interested in ripping apart the manor in search of hidden valuables.

An iron fence 6 feet high extends around the property, about 20 feet away from the building, but it's broken and twisted in so many places that it offers little hindrance. The only possible cover between the fence and the manor is around a couple of small trees near the southeastern corner. Beyond the fence are gently rolling hills.

Synopsis

Characters arrive at the pursuing faction's encampment just within sight of the gates of Shadowghast Manor. Local eyewitnesses claim that Arturas Shadowghast entered the manor the previous day with his allies: a few human mercenaries, a human or half-elf female dressed in robes (the succubus), and several duergar. They had with them a heavily laden wagon.

After getting past archers at the windows and doors, the characters must vanquish the guards on the first floor. If the adventurers examine the first floor before entering the crypts, they find a letter Orobius Shadowghast wrote in his final days. In it, he described his dark deeds and his despair that his soul will never find absolution.

The crypt door is powerfully warded, and a whirling blades trap protects the area nearby. The party's entrance into the crypts attracts the interest of Arturas's new pet, a bloodfire ooze.

Adventurers have little opportunity to rest, and once they enter the crypts, they encounter Arturas Shadowghast and Lyrane as the villains utter the final syllables of the ritual. Blazing skeletons open fire on the adventurers, and three wraiths created from the spirits of the Shadowghasts join the attack. The characters might be able to temporarily pierce through the madness of the wraiths and convince the newly created undead to help restore the honor of the Shadowghast name by attacking Arturas and his allies.

If the party fails, Arturas absorbs the wraiths' essence and emerges from Shadowghast Manor more powerful than ever before.

Involving the Characters

Following are some hooks you might use to get the characters interested in and involved with Shadowghast Manor. As with any adventure, you need to determine how much information the characters have beforehand. These scenarios can be fashioned into quests appropriate for your game.

Pursuing Justice

Plant seeds in earlier sessions to get the characters interested in chasing Arturas Shadowghast before this adventure starts. For instance, the characters

might be tasked with retrieving a rare, dangerous tome of necromantic rituals. They eventually discover that Arturas stole the book. During their pursuit, they might witness the atrocities that Arturas performs to gather components, such as the blood of innocents, for his ritual.

Righting Wrongs

If a necromancer or a nethermancer is in the party, then that adventurer knows Arturas Shadowghast to be more than a fearsome warrior. Arturas is also a ruthless student of shadow magic who once betrayed and slew a close friend of the character. Reports of Arturas's arrival in the area present this character with an opportunity for revenge.

The characters might also or instead know someone Arturas has slain for another reason. Arturas might still carry this victim's blood for use in his ritual.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SHADOWGHASTS

All characters know of the Shadowghasts' recent reputation for evil. With a History check or Religion check result of 15, the character is aware that the Shadowghast name was commonly associated with virtuous warriors a century or so ago. A character successful on a Religion check at this DC knows that the Shadowghasts revered Bahamut, Pelor, and the Raven Queen. With a History check result of 23, the character knows that Orobius Shadowghast had a pivotal role in the family's descent into evil.

Setting History Right

An adventurer or a close ally who is an expert on the region's history knows the Shadowghast family's tragic legacy. Once the news of events at Shadowghast Manor breaks, this character begins to suspect Arturas's motives and encourages the party to act quickly not only to save the spirits of the Shadowghasts but possibly to restore some luster to the Shadowghast name.

1. Stinging Approach

Combat Encounter Level 6 (1,325 XP)

The characters must make their way inside the manor. A quick survey of the exterior reveals the southwestern door to be the structure's only open point of entry. All other entry points are boarded up.

Perception DC 15: Agonized moaning comes from beneath the house. (Characters automatically hear this after they enter the manor.)

Perception DC 22: A character who approaches the manor's southwestern or northwestern corner detects movement behind boarded windows.

Light: Outside light is based on time of day. Inside, the manor has bright light from daylight coming in or from several lanterns.

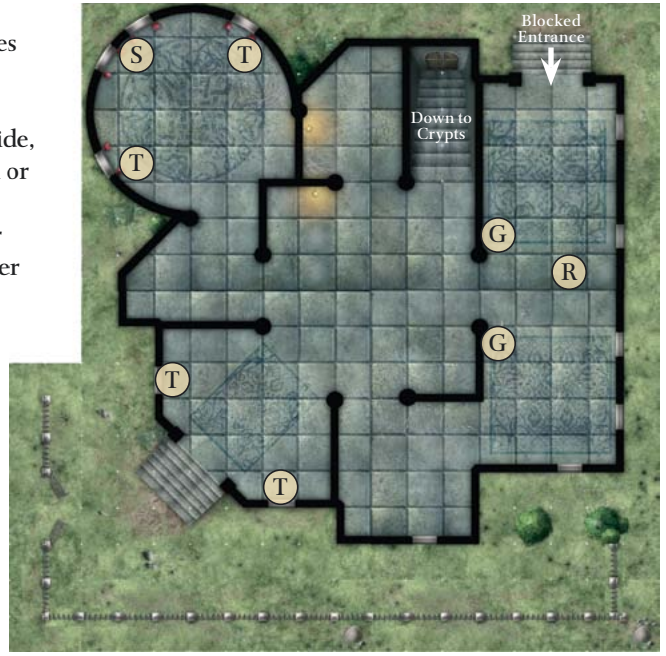
Monsters: 4 human town guards (T), 1 duergar scout (S), 2 duergar guards (G), 1 duergar raid leader (R).

When you're ready to begin, read:
Gray and silent, Shadowghast Manor sits atop a small hill, yet you can't shake the feeling that you're descending. The manor's ivy-covered walls and broken windows carry a trace of the building's former majesty.

Gaining Entry: Characters can enter freely up the stairs and through the southwestern doorway.

Stealth: If the characters attempt a stealthy approach, they can do so only if they advance from an area to which the humans and the duergar scout have no line of sight. If the characters do, have them attempt a DC 17 group Stealth check. If half or more of the characters succeed, they manage to approach without being spotted or heard. If more than half fail, the duergar scout hears them and warns her allies.

Forced Entry: The northeastern door and all manor windows are barricaded or boarded up. (The windows have gaps large enough to allow the mercenaries here to fire crossbows through them.) One of these entry points can still be breached by a character who succeeds on an Athletics check (DC 22 as part of a move action, or DC 15 as a standard action), treating the entryway thereafter as difficult terrain. If the barricaded door is breached, the stairs leading to it



and the two squares just inside it become difficult terrain.

Tactics: The town guards and the duergar scout open fire with crossbows on those who approach and are in line of sight. While making these ranged attacks, the creatures have superior cover against those outside the manor. (Therefore, the scout can move and attempt Stealth checks to become hidden and take advantage of her *shadow attack* trait.) Once it's apparent that the party intends to enter the manor, the town guards switch to halberds and retreat to the sitting room midway along the western wall. The scout becomes invisible, draws her warhammer, and takes up a position to flank the invaders. This group's intent is to distract the characters from the duergar raid leader and his guards.

A TICKING CLOCK

The characters cannot take an extended rest and succeed in thwarting Arturas. Agonized moans from the crypts under the house make such rest impossible in the manor—emphasize these moans as the characters explore. Any character who has training in Arcana, Insight, Nature, or Religion intuits that some foul ritual is disturbing the dead in the house. If it is not stopped, the energy building up can lead only to a worse situation, likely of benefit to the villains This intuition is accurate. Without interference, Arturas completes his ritual successfully, making himself mighty enough to easily ignore and escape the characters, if not kill them.

The duergar guards and the raid leader take up hidden positions once the humans and scout start firing on the characters. They attack from their positions only after the party has engaged the humans and the scout inside the manor, hoping to outflank the intruders. The duergar guards keep themselves between the party and the raid leader to better protect him. The raid leader favors using *raid leader's command* to allow the scout to make a melee basic attack after each turn when she uses a standard action to become invisible with *underdark sneak*.

Forced Entry: If the characters breach an entry point and enter from the east, the northeast, or the south, the duergar guards prepare to intercept anyone who comes through the breached location. The town guards move to fire crossbows from the windows, and then they move behind the duergar guards and attack intruders from a distance with halberds. The scout and the raid leader behave as they would have if the characters had come in through the southwestern doorway.

Once the characters enter the manor, read:
Moth-eaten, wine-red tapestries hang on the wall, and traces of once-ornate carvings decorate the floor. Holes have been bashed in several of the manor's walls.

Treasure: Roll on the treasure table (*Rules Compendium*, page 300) for the party's level, but exclude magic items. The guards here have torn holes in the manor's walls to search for treasure, so any other valuables might be found among their loot.

Lore: If the characters search the rest of the main floor after the battle, they find a letter sticking out of the back of a ripped painting in the western sitting room. The painting depicts an idyllic riverside scene. Orobius Shadowghast wrote the letter during what he knew were his final days. He details the events of the "Background" section from his point of view. He does not downplay or excuse his selfishness and naïveté. He writes that he considered taking his own life, but he has no desire to greet the eternal anguish that he believes either gleeful devils or betrayed deities might inflict upon his soul. He has made arrangements to be buried in the family crypts below. He says his reputation doesn't deserve to be restored. He closes by writing that he wishes that he could undo the harm he has done to the Shadowghast name.

4 Town Guards (T)	**Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150 each
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23	**Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	**Perception** +6
Speed 5	
Standard Actions	
Halberd (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the town guard marks the target until the end of the town guard's next turn.	
Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.	
Powerful Strike (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Triggered Actions	
Interceding Strike (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the town guard makes an attack that doesn't include it as a target.	
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 2 (triggering enemy); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.	
Skills Streetwise +7	
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)	
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow, 20 bolts	

Duergar Scout (S) **Level 4 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 175

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +8
AC 18, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison

Traits

Shadow Attack
The duergar scout's attacks deal 4d6 extra damage when the scout hits a target that cannot see it.

Standard Actions

Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage.

Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.

Underdark Sneak ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The scout becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.

Minor Actions

Infernal Quills (poison) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).

Skills Dungeoneering +9, Stealth +9
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow

2 Duergar Guards (G) **Level 4 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each

HP 58; **Bloodied** 29 **Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison

Standard Actions

Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.
Effect: The duergar guard marks the target until the end of the target's next turn.

Minor Actions

Infernal Anger (fire) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: Until the start of the guard's next turn, its melee attacks deal 4 extra fire damage, and if an enemy adjacent to the guard moves, the guard can shift 1 square as an immediate reaction.

Infernal Quills (poison) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).

Skills Dungeoneering +9
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven
Equipment chainmail, warhammer

Duergar Raid Leader (R) **Level 5 Artillery (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 200

HP 51; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +3
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison

Standard Actions

Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.

Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage.

Raid Leader's Command ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Ranged 5 (one ally). The target can make a basic attack as a free action.

Minor Actions

Infernal Quills (poison) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).

Skills Dungeoneering +9
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 8 (+1)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow

2. Crypt Entrance

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,100 XP)

The characters enter the Shadowghast crypts, possibly triggering a glyph and a whirling blades trap, thereafter facing a bloodfire ooze.

Light: None.

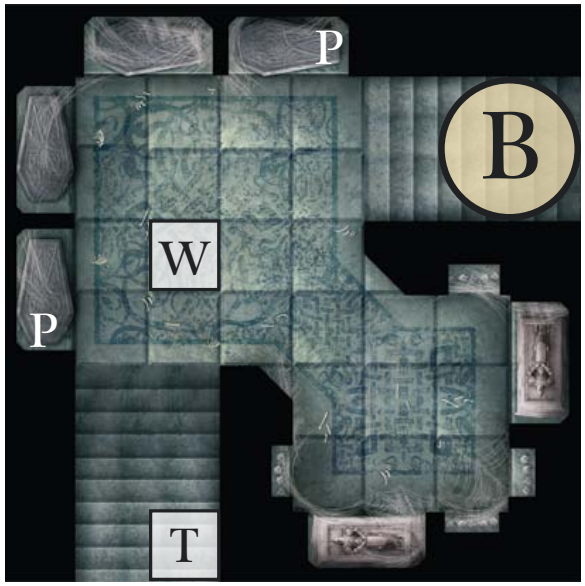
Monsters/Traps: 1 tempest glyph (T), 1 whirling blades trap (W), 1 bloodfire ooze (B).

Once the characters enter, read:

The door to the crypts swings open. Loud moans of pain echo from below. Down a short stairway is a small, stone-tiled room that has burial niches in its walls.

The tempest glyph goes off if a character moves into a square lower on the descending steps than it is. If a character moves adjacent to the mobile whirling blades trap (which drops from a hidden compartment in the ceiling), it triggers and rolls initiative.

Two control panels (P) are concealed within the room (Perception DC 22 to find). If a character is adjacent to a revealed control panel, a successful DC 22 Thievery check deals 15 damage to the whirling blades trap (ignoring the trap's resist 5 all) and reduces its speed by 1.



Lore: The night before, Arturas and Lyrane first attempted the necromantic, spirit-binding ritual. This try did not go as planned. They used the blood of innocents, just as the ritual instructed, but when the blood was spilled on the crypts' shrine, it bonded with the corpses of nearby Shadowghast family members, bringing a bloodfire ooze into being. Fortunately for Arturas and Lyrane, the ooze instinctively recognized them as its creators and obeyed their instructions. The villains then used it as a guardian as they spent the night in the crypts.

Tactics: If either the tempest glyph or the whirling blades trap is activated, the bloodfire ooze moves to the top of the interior stairs to attack. If neither trap triggers, the ooze waits until intruders are in the room before attacking. (It senses intruders immediately due to its blindsight.)

Arturas and Lyrane hear the traps trigger, and any ensuing combat, but they continue with their ritual.

Whirling Blades (W)	**Level 5 Trap**
Object	XP 200
Detect Perception DC 22	**Initiative** +7
HP 55	
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** –	
Resist 5 all; **Immune** necrotic, poison, psychic, all conditions, ongoing damage	
Speed 4	
Standard Actions	
Attack ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.	

Tempest Glyph (T)	**Level 7 Trap**
Object	XP 300
Detect Perception DC 27, Arcana DC 23	**Initiative** –
Immune attacks and damage	
Triggered Actions	
Attack (thunder) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 4d6 thunder damage, and the target slides up to 2 squares and falls prone.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Countermeasures	
✦ **Disable:** Thievery or Arcana DC 23 (the character must be adjacent to the glyph). *Three Successes:* The trap is disabled. *Failure (18 or lower):* The glyph is triggered.	

Bloodfire Ooze (B)	**Level 7 Elite Brute**
Large elemental beast (fire, ooze)	XP 600
HP 196; **Bloodied** 98	**Initiative** +4
AC 19, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	**Perception** +8
Speed 6	Blindsight 20
Immune fire; **Vulnerable** 10 cold	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Bloodfire Aura (fire) ✦ **Aura** 2	
Any creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 10 fire damage.	
Demonic Fire	
Fire damage dealt by the bloodfire ooze ignores 10 points of a target's fire resistance.	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Standard Actions	
Slam (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 7 fire damage.	
Fiery Eruption (fire) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d8 + 2 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Minor Actions	
Sulfuric Breath (poison) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)	
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +10 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 poison damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Boiling Blood (fire) ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The bloodfire ooze is bloodied.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The bloodfire ooze recharges *fiery eruption* and uses it.	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+3)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 1 (-2) **Cha** 4 (+0)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** –	

3. Bloody Shrine

Combat Encounter Level 9 (2,400 XP)

The characters enter the center of the crypts, where Arturas Shadowghast and Lyrane are still working on completing the ritual.

Light: Bright light from lanterns hanging on wall hooks. A faint, green glow (G) also emanates from three burial alcoves in the center of the crypts.

Anyone who approaches one of these glowing alcoves sees a metal plaque above each. One reads "Orobius Shadowghast – Betrayer, Penitent" next to the years of his birth and death. The other alcoves in the crypts offer only the deceased's name and the years of birth and death.

Monsters: Arturas Shadowghast (A), Lyrane the succubus (L), 1 blazing skeleton (S), 3 wraiths (W).

When the characters can see the area, read:

In the lantern light stands a beautiful, red-haired woman who has pointed ears. Blood drenches her robes, making them cling to her form. Standing several feet to her right, near the wall, is a tall, commanding warrior in dark gray scale armor trimmed in gold. His pale, angular face would resemble a statue's if not for the strength and malice in his gaze. He slowly raises a massive flail in mock salute.

Between you and them is a stone shrine, four feet high and coated in blood. A half-dozen jugs, apparently empty, lie on the blood-slicked floor around the shrine.

In the farthest chamber, a flaming, skeletal corpse leans grotesquely against an archway.

The anguished moaning you have heard since you entered the manor suddenly stops. In the silence, the dark warrior flashes a victorious smile. "The spirits of my ancestors now belong to me," he says. "Follow their example. Join me, and you might live."

The flaming skeleton's gaze turns in your direction.

Religion DC 11: *Symbols of the Raven Queen mark the blood-covered shrine.*

Religion DC 15: *Whatever rite has been performed here is a blasphemous act against the Raven Queen.*

Religion DC 23: *The blasphemous ritual is intended to call forth undead spirits.*

Unless the characters immediately offer their allegiance to Arturas, combat begins.

Lore: Some of the virtuous members of the Shadowghast clan who remained at the manor feared for their lives if they stepped beyond the gates, so they created a small shrine to the Raven Queen inside the family crypts. There, they prayed in secret and safety for the souls of their deceased kin. Although many of the greatest Shadowghasts had been followers of Bahamut or Pelor, after Orobius's betrayal, the manor-bound relatives did not dare call upon those noble gods.

Tactics: Arturas engages the characters directly, and then he summons the wraiths to his aid (a minor action). He does whatever he must to protect Lyrane. The succubus moves up to the closest character and uses *charming kiss*. The blazing skeleton remains at range, attacking with *flame orb*.

The wraiths appear and enter combat on their turns during the second round. They howl and moan, cursing Arturas for his corruption and for calling them back to life. Arturas commands them to attack the characters, and they seem painfully compelled to do so until persuaded otherwise (see the skill challenge). Give whatever hints you think are appropriate to suggest to the characters that they might be able to turn the wraiths against Arturas.

Lyrane tries to escape if she starts her turn with fewer than 25 hit points, or if she starts her turn bloodied and Arturas is slain. If Lyrane flees before Arturas dies, he withdraws on the round after she does if he can do so without much risk. The other monsters fight to the death.

Treasure: Roll on the treasure table (*Rules Compendium*, page 300), but include two magic items of the party's level + 1d4 instead of rolling for magic items. One item should be a holy symbol, a martial weapon, or a suit of armor belonging to Arturas. He also carries a map of the manor and the crypts, which shows the traps, and he has a golden key that operates the whirling blades trap control panels in area 2 (automatically enabling or disabling the trap when used on a panel). The other item should be an implement or a protective item belonging to Lyrane. The succubus also has the book that contains the ritual she and Arturas used here. This book might contain other rituals.

Arturas Shadowghast (A) **Level 8 Elite Brute (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 700

HP 208; **Bloodied** 104 **Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21 **Perception** +5
Speed 5
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Bloodthirsty Shadow** (cold, necrotic) ✦ **Aura** 1
When a bloodied enemy in the aura is hit by an attack, that enemy takes 5 extra cold and necrotic damage from the attack.

Standard Actions

⨭ **Dread Flail** (cold, necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 4 damage, and Arturas can slide the target 1 square. If Arturas has combat advantage against the target, the target also takes ongoing 5 cold and necrotic damage (save ends).

Whirling Flail ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Arturas uses *dread flail* twice.

⨭ **Shadow Contamination** (cold, fear, implement, necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Will
Hit: 1d10 + 8 cold and necrotic damage, ongoing 10 cold and necrotic damage (save ends), and Arturas pushes the target up to 3 squares. While the target is taking the ongoing damage, any of its allies adjacent to it at the start of its turn take 5 cold and necrotic damage.

Minor Actions

Ruby Shroud ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Effect: Arturas gains partial concealment until the end of his next turn.

Skills Arcana +9, History +9, Religion +9
Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment scale armor, flail, symbol of Asmodeus

Lyrane, Succubus (L) **Level 9 Controller**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) XP 400

HP 90; **Bloodied** 45 **Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23 **Perception** +8
Speed 6, fly 6 Darkvision
Resist 10 fire

Standard Actions

⨭ **Corrupting Touch** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 6 damage.

⨭ **Charming Kiss** (charm) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); 12 vs. Will
Hit: The target cannot attack the succubus. The effect lasts until the succubus or one of its allies attacks the target, the succubus drops to 0 hit points, or the succubus uses this power again. If the target is affected by *charming kiss* at the end of the encounter, the effect lasts until the succubus fails to kiss the target during a 24-hour period. See also *loyal consort*.

Dominate (charm) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +12 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of the succubus's next turn.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The succubus alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses *change shape* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the succubus must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 30 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.

Triggered Actions

Loyal Consort (charm) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: A melee or a ranged attack targets the succubus while it is adjacent to a creature affected by its *charming kiss*.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering attack instead targets the creature affected by the succubus's *charming kiss*.

Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Insight +13
Str 11 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 19 (+8)
Con 10 (+4) **Int** 15 (+6) **Cha** 22 (+10)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

3 Wraiths (W) **Level 5 Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 200 each

HP 53; **Bloodied** 26 **Initiative** +10
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15 **Perception** +2
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover); phasing Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Traits

Insubstantial
The wraith takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage. Whenever the wraith takes radiant damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.

Spawn Wraith
When the wraith kills a humanoid, that humanoid becomes a wraith figment at the start of this wraith's next turn. The new wraith appears in the space where the humanoid died or in the nearest unoccupied square, and it rolls a new initiative check. The new wraith acts under the Dungeon Master's control.

Standard Actions

⨭ **Shadow Touch** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, or 4d6 + 14 necrotic damage if the wraith was invisible to the target when it attacked.

Triggered Actions

Shadow Glide (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An attack that does not deal force or radiant damage hits the wraith.
Effect (Free Action): The wraith becomes invisible until it hits or misses with an attack or until the end of the encounter. The wraith teleports up to 6 squares and cannot attack until the end of its next turn.

Skills Stealth +11
Str 4 (-1) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 15 (+4)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Blazing Skeleton (S)	**Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 200
HP 53; **Bloodied** 26	**Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Traits	
☼ **Fiery Aura** (fire) ✦ **Aura** 1	
Any creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Blazing Claw** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
⊛ **Flame Orb** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+0)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Persuading the Wraiths

This skill challenge starts as soon as any character attempts to persuade the wraiths to turn against or cease serving Arturas. Once the skill challenge is under way, if a character hits or misses a wraith with an attack, the party earns one failure in the skill challenge.

Level: 6 (500 XP).

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Time Frame: Each character can make one check per round as a standard action.

Primary Skills: History, Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate, Religion.

History (DC 15): The character cites examples of past Shadowghast heroism to remind the spirits of the family's proud past.

Diplomacy (DC 23): The character appeals to the virtuous memories still present with the spirits. If the player cites Orobius's desire for forgiveness, the DC for that particular check is instead 11.

Insight (DC 15): The character senses the wraiths' desire to break free of Arturas's control, and the character appeals to that desire.

Intimidate (DC 23): The character invokes the horror of Arturas's allegiances, reminding the spirits that damnation is all that awaits those who side with the dark warrior.

Religion (DC 15): The character uses appropriate religious doctrine to appeal to the spirits. Perhaps Bahamut's favor can be regained by thwarting Arturas. Maybe a willing desire for Pelor's light can free the wraiths and burn away the mark on the Shadowghast name. The Raven Queen might be appeased if Arturas's soul is sent into the afterlife and her shrine is cleansed of his blasphemy.

Success: The wraiths fly through the room, dealing 20 damage to Arturas and each of his allies and cleansing the Raven Queen's shrine. They then fade away with a collective sigh.

Failure: Under Arturas's command, the wraiths continue to attack the party. The party can attempt the skill challenge again.

Conclusion

If the wraiths aided the party, the characters sense a feeling of relief within the walls of the manor, as though the anguished spirits have finally found peace.

Any enemies that escape can show up again later in your campaign. If Lyrane fled the crypts with the ritual tome, she might have more fiendish plots to pursue using the book. Arturas will want vengeance if he survived the characters' assault. He is more than willing to continue working with Lyrane if both villains manage to flee the manor.

Even if Arturas died, he isn't necessarily the last of the corrupt Shadowghasts. Another Shadowghast scion might begin plotting revenge against the party once news of Arturas's death spreads.

If you want to expand the adventure with encounters you have designed, further exploration of the crypts might uncover passageways and chambers that Orobius once used or that predate his generation.

About the Author

Ken Hart has worked on Goodman Games's *Dungeon Crawl Classics* and *Etherscope*. His recent contributions include "Faith and Heresy" in *Dragon* 397, "Strange Gods" in *Dragon* 398, and "History Check: Kas and Vecna" in *Dragon* 402. When not teaching his preschool daughter about gelatinous cubes, he blogs about gaming, pop culture, and Survivor at ken-of-ghastria.livejournal.com.

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Heart of the Scar

An adventure for characters of levels 9-11

By Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel

Illustrations by Eric Belisle, Christopher Burdett, and Peter Tikos

Cartography by Jason Engle

The time has finally come to assault the fortress-temple standing above the remnants of the ancient meteor that carved the Chaos Scar centuries ago. A horrific creature lurks below the edifice, and this monster has the power to shake the citadel to its foundations and wreak havoc throughout the Nentir Vale.

"Heart of the Scar" is an adventure for characters of levels 9–11. It takes place in the Chaos Scar, within Hallowgaunt, a fortress-temple that belongs to the Brotherhood of the Scar, a wayward cult of Bane.

Background

The Far Realm is home to countless alien abominations, some of which rival the mightiest gods in power. Occasionally, these great entities clash over motives and machinations far beyond the ken of mortal minds. Rarer still, one of these terrible beings is defeated, stripped of its power, and hurled into the dark cosmos to wander the void for eternity.

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Such was the fate of the entity known as Shoth-Gorag. However, Shoth-Gorag had made inroads into the world of mortals, attracting the attention of warlocks and mad cultists. Banished from its domain in the Far Realm, Shoth-Gorag used what remained of its power to pass into the mortal world, in hopes that it might go unnoticed and slowly rebuild its strength.

Shoth-Gorag's physical form had been destroyed, and all that remained of the malign entity was its heart, a calcified chunk of unspeakable evil. This rock shot across the cosmos and impacted the world centuries ago, carving out what is now called the Chaos Scar. After the heart fell, a group of Banites discovered it. Mistaking the heart for a gift from their tyrannical deity, they took it. Around it, high on the cliffs above the Chaos Scar, they built a small fortress-temple they named Hallowgaunt.

The heart of Shoth-Gorag became the center of worship for the Banites. From their temple, the heart began to exert its influence, inundating the surrounding area with its evil. Its presence acted as clarion call to wicked creatures, and such monsters began to come to the Chaos Scar in great numbers. Over the years, Shoth-Gorag has fed on the constant violence and turmoil in the valley.

Shoth-Gorag has also been poisoning the minds of the Banites in Hallowgaunt. Banite clerics there draw some of their strength directly from Shoth-Gorag. Its influence has also begun to twist the bodies of these misguided servitors, and some of them have bizarre deformities indicative of exposure to the Far Realm's energy. These Banites have come to call themselves the Brotherhood of the Scar.

While gaining mastery over Hallowgaunt, Shoth-Gorag has also amassed enough power to begin the final phase of its plans. It is undergoing a hideous resurgence, building a physical body worthy of a Far Realm lord. To build this physical form, Shoth-Gorag requires ample supplies of flesh. It has been sending out its most trusted servants, members of the Brotherhood of the Scar, to capture creatures great and small. Any unfortunates these Banites capture are dragged back to Hallowgaunt to be tortured out of their wits and cast down to where Shoth-Gorag dwells deep under the fortress.

Shoth-Gorag absorbs those brought to it, using their flesh as raw material to construct a horrific body around its heart. Soon, Shoth-Gorag will be powerful enough to move beyond the temple of Bane and begin absorbing the myriad creatures dwelling in the Chaos Scar. Their evil, insanity, and flesh will become its own, until nothing remains except Shoth-Gorag and its truest servants.

Although Shoth-Gorag now controls a majority of the priests and soldiers serving in Hallowgaunt, a small group of temple guards loyal to Bane resisted the Far Realm lord's growing influence. These faithful Banites surreptitiously sought aid from their allies outside the Chaos Scar, seeking is a means to destroy Shoth-Gorag and return the temple to Bane.

Another temple sent a potent relic to its allies in the Chaos Scar. This item, a powerful warhammer called *Farbane*, was crafted to destroy interlopers from the Far Realm. Shortly after the hammer arrived, however, Shoth-Gorag became aware of the insurrection. Shoth-Gorag's loyalists attacked the rebellious Banites and seized *Farbane*. Most of Bane's true servants were slain or captured for torture. Shoth-Gorag then called forth a potent aberrant guardian for Hallowgaunt's reliquary, where *Farbane* is now stored.

A fraction of the faithful Banites managed to escape Shoth-Gorag's purging. Most perished during their escape or while crossing the Chaos Scar with the Brotherhood of the Scar in pursuit. However, one made it to the King's Wall. This surviving Banite, a human named Yorven, hopes to find allies powerful enough to end Shoth-Gorag's growing threat.

Adventure Synopsis

While traveling into or out of the Chaos Scar, the party discovers a wounded Banite under attack. The wounded human is Yorven. His assailants are members of the Brotherhood of the Scar. After defeating the members of the Brotherhood of the Scar and, perhaps, rescuing Yorven, the party gains most of the information presented in the Background section. Yorven, if he lives, asks the party to travel to Hallowgaunt and destroy the horrific evil within.

From information Yorven shares or carries with him, the characters find they can gain access to Hallowgaunt through a secret tunnel that runs underneath. This tunnel is the means by which Yorven and some of his allies escaped, but other loyal servants of Bane might remain within the temple and be willing to lend a hand against Shoth-Gorag. The adventurers also learn of the warhammer *Farbane*. If the party can infiltrate the temple and claim the weapon, *Farbane* can help destroy Shoth-Gorag.

Armed with Yorven's information, the adventurers make their way through the Chaos Scar to the base of the great cliffs, atop which sits the fortress-temple of Hallowgaunt. They find Yorven's secret tunnel and navigate its dark passages up into the first level of the temple. Inside, the characters face the first lines of the Brotherhood of the Scar's defenses.

The adventurers then proceed down to the second level. Horrific creatures from or polluted by the Far Realm lurk here. As the characters win through, they can claim *Farbane* and gain aid from a small group of faithful Banites held prisoner here.

Likely with *Farbane* in hand, the adventurers can make their way to the third level, a cavernous chamber carved from the bedrock of the cliffs. Here awaits the cosmic horror of Shoth-Gorag and a battle the characters will not soon forget . . . if they survive.

Dark Rumors

This adventure assumes the characters have prior experience in the Chaos Scar, and that they are acquainted with its history and perils. As veteran adventurers, the characters have likely heard rumors about the Brotherhood of the Scar. Streetwise checks can grant the following information.

Streetwise DC 12: The Brotherhood of the Scar has been more active in the Chaos Scar lately.

Streetwise DC 17: Small, well-armed groups of brotherhood soldiers have been spotted attacking monsters and humanoids within the Chaos Scar. These raids are to capture rather than kill.

Streetwise DC 25: Brotherhood soldiers have been taking captives to Hallowgaunt, where the brotherhood must be building a slave army or something worse.

Treasure

This adventure contains no specific treasure other than *Farbane*. Hallowgaunt has plenty of places for treasure, including if you wish, some extra loot hidden to reward exploration. In addition to *Farbane*, include at least nine treasures (or treasure parcels) appropriate to the characters' level.

Ideal locations for treasure include the armory, captain's quarters, kennel, profane chapel, reliquary, and any barracks. Tainted Banites in the first encounter might have a little money, but they are unlikely to have anything else of high value. Among nonplayer characters in Hallowgaunt, Alain, Garvan, Dasharr, and the kennel master are the most likely to be carrying treasure on their person.

Hallowgaunt's Banites are isolated and prefer practical wealth. Considering this fact, you might place more art objects, such as idols, and useful consumable items in Hallowgaunt than coins and gems.

Introduction

The adventure starts as the characters near the King's Wall during a journey into or out of the Chaos Scar.

As the adventurers near the King's Wall, read:
The King's Wall looms ahead, rising over dense trees that dominate this area of the Chaos Scar. Breaches in the wall are common and easily used to pass in and out of the valley. One of these breaches lies ahead within a clearing, and the sound of battle comes from nearby.

Beleaguered Banite

As the characters approach the breach in the King's Wall, they hear a confrontation unfolding.

When adventurers approach the breach, read:
Ahead, beyond the breach in the wall, three warriors, one clad in chainmail and the others in leather armor, stand in a loose circle with two massive war dogs around a fourth warrior, a human male. Each warrior has the symbol of a stylized three-clawed hand upon armor, tabard, or shield. The surrounded human has one hand clamped over his side, and blood pours between his clenched fingers.

Any character trained in Religion can see that all the warriors, including Yorven, wear the symbol of Bane. The brotherhood members are focused on Yorven, so any attempt at stealth allows the characters to move closer, overhear the conversation presented below, and learn more about the situation.

Priest: *"Yorven, you can't escape us. Submit, and the master might show mercy. There is no help for you now."*

Yorven: *"The only master I serve is Bane. The foul creature you serve profanes our lord's temple."*

Priest: *"We serve the master of the temple, the master of this valley, and soon, the master of this world. You fight the inevitable."*

Yorven: *"What of my comrades? What have you done with them?"*

Priest: *"Soon, their flesh shall be added to the master's, their knowledge to its knowledge, their strength to its strength. One could not wish for a more glorious end."*

Yorven: *"Fools! Your master will consume you all. Find your faith! Return to Bane! Help me seek aid to end this blight on our creed."*

Priest: *"The master grows strong. It shall devour all who stand against it. Those who remain faithful shall be allowed to serve. At the end of all things, not even Bane can offer sanctuary from mighty Shoth-Gorag."*

Yorven: *(He spits on the ground.)*

Priest: *"Slay this fool, and let us be done with this."*

The adventurers can interrupt at any time. Otherwise, when the tainted Banites move in for the kill, the hounds notice one or more of the characters. The brotherhood members attack the adventurers "for Shoth-Gorag!" Go to Encounter 1.

A Banite in Need

Once the adventurers have defeated the tainted Banites, Yorven approaches them. If Yorven is dead, the party finds on his body a report intended for other Banites. This report contains all the necessary information to inform the adventurers of the situation. If you wish to create other adventures against Banites, the report could also indicate the location of another secret Banite stronghold.

If Yorven lives at the battle's end, read:
The wounded human moves slowly toward you, grimacing with each footstep. He says nothing for a few moments, his face set as he looks you over. Then, he frowns, gestures at the corpses strewn around the clearing, and says, "You did for these traitorous bastards. You'll do."

Yorven is entirely forthcoming about the situation at Hallowgaunt. He sees the characters' timely arrival as a sign from Bane. If the adventurers doubt Yorven, a few successful DC 12 Insight checks tell them he is honest and frightened. The characters should receive the following information.

- The meteor that carved the Chaos Scar is not a mere rock. It is the malign heart of a horrid entity from beyond space and time.
- Worshipers of Bane found the meteor and took it back to Hallowgaunt. They believed the meteor to be a gift from Bane, and it became central to the temple's worship. (Yorven identifies the symbol he wears as that of Bane.) The Banites at Hallowgaunt named their cult the Brotherhood of the Scar.
- Over the last few years, the meteor regained its awareness. It began exerting its will over the Brotherhood of the Scar.
- In the last year, the meteor revealed itself as a malignant entity called Shoth-Gorag. It has corrupted the majority of the Banites and swayed them to worship it instead of Bane. Its most fervent servants have been tasked with bringing flesh to their master so that it can construct a body around its heart.
- Yorven was part of a splinter group that resisted Shoth-Gorag and sought to destroy it. This group sent word to allies and received a great relic, the warhammer *Farbane*. Yorven believes *Farbane* can destroy the meteor that is Shoth-Gorag's heart. Yorven knows the hammer is still within the temple, but not where.
- Shoth-Gorag discovered the splinter group, and battle ensued in the temple. Some, including Yorven, decided they must take word to other Banites. They fled through a secret tunnel under Hallowgaunt. The Brotherhood of the Scar pursued, and Yorven was the only one to survive the trek across the Chaos Scar.
- Loyal Banites might yet live within the temple, probably in the fort's prison. They are likely to aid anyone seeking to destroy Shoth-Gorag.
- Yorven believes that Shoth-Gorag is growing in power and might soon be powerful enough to move beyond the temple and exert its dominance over the Chaos Scar and the surrounding lands.

Fill in additional details from the Background and Adventure Synopsis sections as you see fit. After telling his tale, Yorven departs, heading for Restwell Keep. Unless you wish to keep him around as a companion character, he refuses to aid the party further.

Shoth-Gorag

Characters skilled in Dungeoneering might know more about Shoth-Gorag.

Dungeoneering DC 12: The name Shoth-Gorag and Yorven's description of the entity suggest the creature is native to the Far Realm.

Dungeoneering DC 17: Centuries ago, certain warlocks who drew power from the Far Realm did so in the name of an entity called Shoth-Gorag.

Dungeoneering DC 25: Most of the creatures inhabiting the Far Realm are nameless horrors. Those with names, such as Shoth-Gorag, are often powerful beings that can rival the gods in power.

Quests

You might give the characters quests at this point. Minor quests could include locating any surviving Banites in Hallowgaunt and gaining their information, as well as locating and recovering *Farbane*. The major quest of the adventure might be to destroy Shoth-Gorag's heart with *Farbane*.

Yorven

Tunnel to Temple

Armed with the information from Yorven, the adventurers trek across the Chaos Scar to the base of the cliffs atop which the Banite fortress-temple sits. Although it is cleverly hidden behind a mass of thorny bushes, the tunnel Yorven's group used to escape the temple is easy to find.

The tunnel runs nearly 2 miles underground, and it is roughly 15 feet wide and 10 feet high. It opens up into numerous wider caverns. The tunnel goes up at a steady incline, eventually ending in a trapdoor that opens into the upper level of Hallowgaunt into area F1 (see the map on page 8).

If you want to further illustrate the growing power of Shoth-Gorag, some of the Banites have become so corrupted they have become foulspawn. A group of these foulspawn could have taken up residence in one of the tunnel caverns. You can create an encounter with these denizens, using foulspawn statistics found in this adventure.

After the battle, the characters find items on the corpses that suggest the foulspawn were once human. Include holy symbols of Bane, as well as shredded armor and clothing of the Brotherhood of the Scar.

Hallowgaunt

The fortress-temple Hallowgaunt sits atop the soaring cliffs on the western edge of the Chaos Scar.

Level 1: Fortress

The upper level of Hallowgaunt looks like any small military fortress befitting Bane. It has all the necessities to function on a day-to-day basis. Shoth-Gorag's influence has not affected the soldiers and acolytes on this level to a great extent. The warriors here react to intruders with extreme hostility.

See page 8 for the map of Level 1.

Features of the Fortress

All areas of the fortress share these features in common unless noted otherwise.

Illumination: Small windows near the ceiling provide bright light during the day. At night, torches in wall sconces provide bright illumination.

Ceiling: Ceilings are 15 feet high.

Furniture: Unless noted otherwise, furnishings are difficult terrain. Higher furnishings, such as tables, might require checks to move atop or be blocking terrain. Most furnishings can provide cover.

Outer Wall: This fortification is 15 feet high (Athletics DC 18 to climb), 3 feet thick, and constructed of massive blocks of granite.

Fortress Rooms

The upper level of Hallowgaunt figures prominently in Encounter 2 and Encounter 3. However, battle could spill into other areas. Below are brief descriptions of such areas. Unless noted otherwise, locks on this level require a DC 17 Thievery check to open or a DC 25 Athletics check to break.

Kennel (F5): Straw covers the earthen floor here, and two sets of shelves against the back wall hold a variety of leashes, combs, and other beast-care tools. The kennel master's cot rests against the back wall with a locked chest underneath. Four large cages house the hounds at rest. Each cage is 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 5 feet tall, and locked with a simple lock (Thievery DC 13 to open; Athletics DC 21 to break).

Armory (F6): The door to this area is locked with a stout padlock. Inside the room are numerous armor stands holding chainmail and leather armor, as well as cabinets filled with weapons and ammunition. A small, unlit forge is against the back wall.

Mess Hall (F7): This room holds three large tables each with six chairs. Against the east wall are a low serving table and a cabinet that holds plates, cups, and eating utensils.

Captain's Quarters (F8): This room has a bed, a small altar to Bane, a small table, two chairs, numerous shelves, a locked cabinet, and two armor stands. The captain's personal items are inside the cabinet.

Kitchen (F9): This cooking area has a high counter that runs the length of the north and east walls, as well as numerous cooking utensils, knives, pans, and other containers hanging from the walls. A larder in the southeast corner holds all manner of food.

Level 2: Temple

This level once served as the main place of worship for the followers of Bane. However, the Banites here are completely under Shoth-Gorag's sway, and they all bear the dread taint of the Far Realm. The temple contains a grand chapel, barracks, a prison and torture chamber, and a reliquary that houses *Farbane*. A number of Yorven's compatriots languish in the prison. If freed, they might aid the characters.

See page 12 for the map of Level 2.

Features of the Temple

All areas of the temple share these features unless noted otherwise.

Illumination: Torches in sconces create bright illumination.

Ceiling: The ceilings are 15 feet high.

Walls: The walls are tight-fitting granite bricks (Athletics DC 18 to climb).

Level 3: Shoth-Gorag's Pit

This level consists of little more than a raised stone platform overlooking a vast natural cavern. Within a shallow depression in the cavern, the vast horror of Shoth-Gorag seethes and bubbles, its heart encased in an organic body that is a blasphemous melding of hundreds of unfortunate creatures. Above Shoth-Gorag, hanging in the air, is a portal to the Far Realm.

See page 21 for the map of Level 3.

Conclusion

With Shoth-Gorag destroyed, the peril of the Chaos Scar diminishes over time. Without the chaotic power of the Far Realm lord drawing evil creatures to the region, fewer monsters come into the area to replace those that fall to adventurers. However, much evil still exists beyond the King's Wall, and mighty heroes are still needed to keep that evil from spilling out into the world.

Hallowgaunt, while obviously the nerve center of the Brotherhood of the Scar, is far too small to house all the members of the far-reaching cult. The brotherhood still exists. It has other bases of operations outside the Chaos Scar.

Shoth-Gorag has been destroyed, but other Far Realm lords could assume control of the Brotherhood of the Scar and continue to provide the cult with assistance from the Far Realm. Whether such an event occurs, the Brotherhood of the Scar is eager to avenge its past setbacks upon the characters.

The adventurers likely still have *Farbane*, an important relic of the Bane's faith. If the characters find Yorven at Restwell Keep after the adventure, they can return the hammer to him. However, if the adventurers decide to keep the relic, Bane's faithful come to reclaim it, using force if necessary.

Any or all these scenarios can provide for further adventures in or based on the Chaos Scar as the characters advance through the paragon tier.

Encounter 1: My Enemy's Enemies

Encounter Level 9 (XP 2,100)

Setup

1 tainted warpriest (T)
2 tainted scouts (S)
2 war hounds (W)
Yorven (Y)

When the fight begins, read:
Subtle differences distinguish Yorven and those who threaten him. Yorven is undeniably human, but his attackers all bear strange deformities such as spines, horns, and other bizarre growths on exposed flesh. Their chainmail-clad leader is the most deformed—his skin is translucent white, exposing the veins and muscle beneath.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light (daylight).

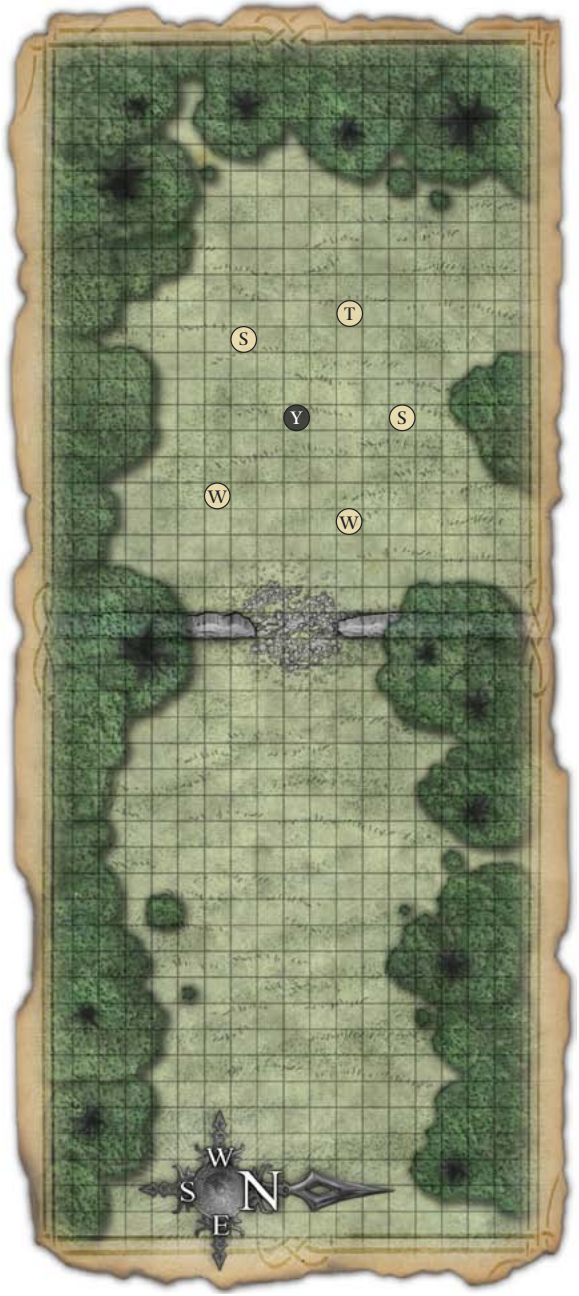
King's Wall: The wall is 15 feet high (Athletics DC 18 to climb). It is 5 feet thick in this area. The top of the wall is rough, so it's difficult terrain.

Trees: Smaller trees are 20 feet tall, and the larger-trunked ones are 30 feet tall. Their trunks are blocking terrain that can be climbed (Athletics DC 12). Above half a given tree's height, thick leaves render the tree's area lightly obscured.

Rubble: A large section of the wall has collapsed, covering the area in rubble that is difficult terrain.

Conclusion

Even if Yorven dies, the characters can acquire the information they need for the adventure to proceed. See "A Banite in Need," page 3.



2 Tainted Scouts (S) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 400 each

HP 96; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +11
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20 **Perception** +8
Speed 6

Traits

Disquieting Movement
The scout has a +2 bonus to all defenses during its turn.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 9 damage, or 2d6 + 14 if the scout has combat advantage against the target.
Effect: The scout shifts 1 square after the attack.

⸸ **Brutal Stab** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature the scout is flanking or one prone creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Move Actions

Swift Repositioning ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Effect: The scout shifts up to half its speed.

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidate +11, Stealth +14
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 15 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, short sword

Tainted Warpriest (T) **Level 10 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 500

HP 105; **Bloodied** 52 **Initiative** +7
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23 **Perception** +5
Speed 5

Traits

☼ **Disquieting Presence** (fear) ✦ **Aura** 2
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Mace** (fear, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage.
Effect: The warpriest slides the target up to 3 squares.

⊛ **Grasping Terror** (fear, implement, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead immobilized (save ends).

✧ **Force Tremor** (fear, force, implement) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 10 force damage, and the warpriest pushes the target up to 3 squares and knocks it prone.

Skills Intimidate +15, Religion +11
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 17 (+8) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+10)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment chainmail, mace, holy symbol

2 War Hounds (W) **Level 9 Brute**
Medium natural beast XP 400 each

HP 116; **Bloodied** 58 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 5 damage, or 3d10 + 10 damage against a prone target, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 17). While the hound has a target grabbed, it can use *bite* only against that target.

Minor Actions

⸸ **Pull Down** ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the hound); +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target falls prone.
Miss: The grab ends.

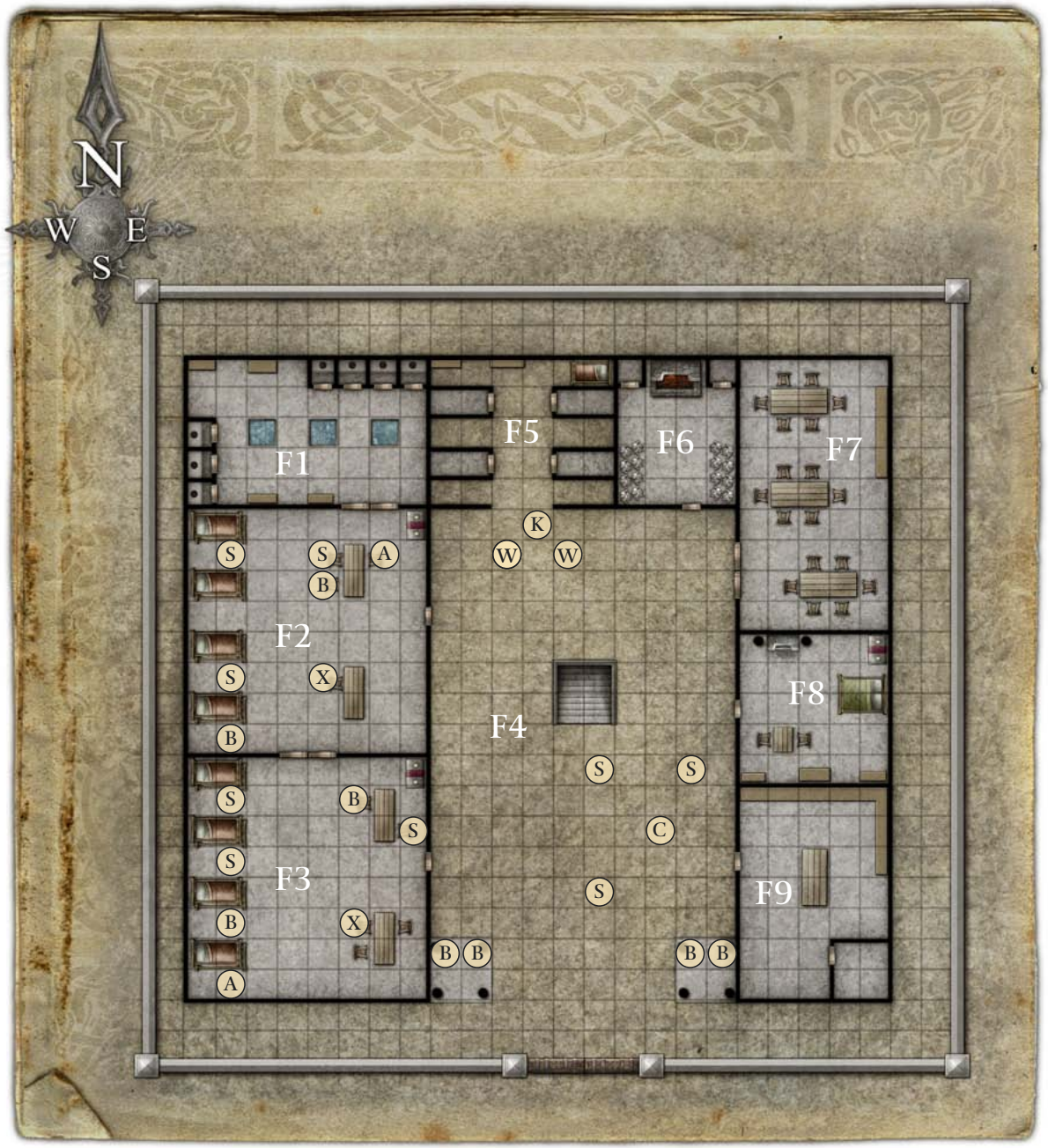
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Tactics

The warpriest closes in and uses *force tremor*. He then wades into melee with his mace, targeting prone characters. If he has no melee targets available, he uses *grasping terror*.

Scouts and war hounds enter melee to protect the warpriest. The scouts shift to flank their foes or use *swift repositioning* to quickly assault a prone target with *brutal stab*. Once a war hound has grabbed an enemy, it keeps that enemy grabbed and prone.

Yorven: Too wounded to offer much assistance, Yorven retreats to the nearby woods. He might aid the characters if they falter. If necessary, use Banite captain statistics (page 10), but Yorven has only 25 hit points remaining.



Encounter 2: Latrine Duty

Encounter Level 10 (XP 2,500)

The tunnel up through the cliffs ends in an iron trapdoor that leads to one of the privies in the main barracks latrines (area F1).

When the characters reach area F1, read:
The end of the tunnel terminates in a set of iron rungs leading upward to an iron trapdoor. An unpleasant odor wafts into the tunnel from above. Beyond the trapdoor is a small privy. The latrine's bench is behind you, and the privy door is shut before you.

The latrines are empty when the characters arrive.

When the party leaves the privy stall, read:
The privy opens up onto a large room that has stone floors. Seven privy stalls take up the north and west walls. A trio of bathing pools occupies middle of the room, and a set of wooden doors is set into the south wall.

Perception DC 13: *Muffled voices can be heard beyond the southern doors.*

The southern doors lead to area F2, but they're closed, so the party's arrival goes unnoticed. If the characters take any precautions to remain undetected, they surprise the Banites in area F2. The Banites are not expecting attackers to burst out of the latrines.

Setup

2 Banite sergeants (X)
2 Banite acolytes (A)
6 Banite soldiers (S)
4 Banite bolters (B)

Indicated inhabitants represent the combined forces of areas F2 (northern barracks) and F3 (southern barracks).

When the adventurers reach area F2, read:
This room is a military barracks. Four sets of bunk beds sit against the west wall, each with two trunks beneath the bottom bunk. Beyond the beds, the room contains a pair of tables, each with chairs, and a small altar to Bane in the northeast corner. Another set of double doors leads away to the south and a second, smaller door is set into the east wall. Seven heavily armed warriors reside here, all bearing the symbol of Bane on some piece of clothing or armor.

Perception DC 13: *Barked orders and baying hounds can be heard beyond the smaller door.*

The Banites attack immediately. Sounds of combat in area F2 are easily heard by the forces in the south barracks (area F3), who come running. The noise on the parade ground (area F4) prevents the Banites there from hearing any battle here soon enough to reinforce the barracks.

2 Banite Acolytes (A) **Level 10 Minion Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23 **Perception** +8
Speed 6

Standard Actions
Mace (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage, and if the acolyte scores a critical hit, the target grants combat advantage (save ends).
Bane's Beckon (charm, implement) ✦ **Recharge** if the power misses
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The acolyte slides the target up to 3 squares. Then one ally of the acolyte that is adjacent to the target can make a melee basic attack against it as a free action.

Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 10 (+5) **Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 13 (+6)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment chainmail, mace, holy symbol

2 Banite Sergeants (X) **Level 10 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 500 each

HP 103; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +8
AC 26, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22 **Perception** +8
Speed 5

Traits
Formation Fighter
The sergeant gains combat advantage against an enemy if any of its allies has combat advantage against that enemy.

Standard Actions
Battleaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage.
Effect: The target grants combat advantage until it hits the sergeant with an attack (save ends).

Minor Actions
Shield Bash (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature granting combat advantage to the sergeant); +15 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target falls prone.

Triggered Actions
Pursuing Shield Bash ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Trigger: An enemy starts its turn adjacent to the sergeant but ends its turn not adjacent to the sergeant.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The sergeant shifts up to its speed and uses *shield bash* against the triggering enemy.

Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 13 (+6)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment scale armor, light shield, battleaxe

6 Banite Soldiers (S) **Level 10 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +6
AC 22, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, Will 22 **Perception** +7
Speed 5

Standard Actions
Morningstar (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 11 damage, plus 1 extra damage for each ally of the soldier adjacent to the target.

Str 16 (+8) **Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment chainmail, morningstar

4 Banite Bolters (B) **Level 10 Minion Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +11
Speed 6

Standard Actions
Short Sword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 7 damage.
Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage, or 11 damage if the bolter has any cover.

Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 17 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 11 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, short sword, crossbow, 20 bolts

Tactics

Soldiers and sergeants rush to engage in melee, while the bolters flip over a table (a minor action) and take cover behind it. Acolytes use *Bane's beckon* to slide enemies toward the soldiers and sergeants, who stick together to benefit from *formation fighter* and extra *morningstar* damage.

If both sergeants are killed, the rest of the Banites retreat into the parade ground (area F4) and regroup with the Banites there (see Encounter 3).

Features of the Area

Altar: This is a simple shrine dedicated to Bane.

Bunks: These beds are 7 feet high and bolted to the floor. A ladder on the side of each bunk provides access to the top bed.

Pools: The bathing pools in the latrines are 2 feet deep and difficult terrain.

Tables: A creature can jump atop one of these oak tables as part of a move action (Athletics DC 18).

Encounter 3: Parade Ground

Encounter Level 11 (XP 3,175)

Setup

1 Banite captain (C)
1 kennel master (K)
2 war hounds (W)
3 Banite soldiers (S)
4 Banite bolters (B)

Use the map on page 8 to run this encounter, referring to area F4.

To reach the stairwell that leads down to the second level of Hallowgaunt, the adventurers must brave the parade ground and defeat the rest of the Banite defenders. Alain, the Banite captain who commands the first level of the fortress, has heard the combat in the barracks, and he marshals what remains of his forces.

When the adventurers exit the barracks, read:
A U-shaped stone building encloses a large parade ground, which has an earthen surface worn flat and hard. In the center of the parade ground is a walled staircase leading down into darkness. Across the area are three other doors. To the north are two more doorways, one a steel door and the second an open entryway into straw-covered area. A set of massive wooden gates reinforced with bands of steel closes the parade ground in on the south. Just inside the gates are two raised platforms, each rising high enough to allow those on them a view over the fortress walls. Beyond the wall, a cliff side soars up and disappears into the mist.

Alain has positioned his forces around the parade ground to best deal with invaders.

When the adventurers see the Banites, read:
Across from you stands a tall human warrior in black plate armor with red trim, a glittering bastard sword in his hand. Other soldiers stand beside him. Nearby, a muscular human in leather armor stands behind two massive war hounds, each straining against its leash. On the raised platforms, four humans armed with crossbows take aim at you.

Tactics

When combat begins, Alain and his soldiers charge the adventurers. The kennel master uses *sic 'em* to push the war hounds into melee combat. Bolters on the raised platforms fire their crossbows.

As the battle progresses, Alain and his soldiers team up with allies, trying to gain an increase in damage and combat advantage. Alain uses *rally point* to allow his allies to reposition themselves tactically to these ends.

Features of the Area

Platforms: These simple platforms are 15 feet from the ground. Each has a ladder nailed to it, allowing access to the top.

Walled Staircase: This staircase's wall is 5 feet high. It can provide cover. The stairs are steep enough to be difficult terrain. They lead down to Encounter 4.

Conclusion

Alain has the key to the armory, the key to the cabinet in his room, and a skeleton key that unlocks the kennel cages. On the kennel master's belt is a skeleton key that opens the kennel cages, as well as a key to the chest under his cot.

Banite Captain (C) **Level 10 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 1,000

HP 208; **Bloodied** 104 — **Initiative** +9
AC 26, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +12
Speed 6
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Formation Fighter
The captain gains combat advantage against an enemy if any of its allies has combat advantage against that enemy.

Standard Actions

Bastard Sword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 9 damage.
Effect: The target grants combat advantage until it hits the captain with an attack (save ends).

Move Actions

Rally Point ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: Each ally within 5 squares of the captain can shift up to half its speed as a free action.

Minor Actions

Shield Slam (weapon) ✦ **At-Will** (1/turn)
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and if the target is granting combat advantage to the captain, the target falls prone.

Triggered Actions

Pursuing Shield Slam ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Trigger: An enemy starts its turn adjacent to the captain but ends its turn not adjacent to the captain.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The captain shifts up to its speed and uses *shield slam* against the triggering enemy.

Skills Athletics +14, Intimidate +13

Str 19 (+9)	**Dex** 15 (+7)	**Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 16 (+8)	**Int** 12 (+6)	**Cha** 17 (+8)

Alignment evil — **Languages** Common
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword

Kennel Master (K) **Level 10 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 500

HP 103; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +7
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23 **Perception** +9
Speed 6

Traits

Hounder
Allied natural beasts have combat advantage against any enemy that the master is adjacent to.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Mace** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage, or 2d8 + 13 damage against a prone target, and the master pushes the target up to 2 squares.

Sic 'Em ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: Close burst 3 (one or two allied natural beasts in the burst); the target can shift up to half its speed and make a melee basic attack as a free action.

Minor Actions

⊕ **Whip** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when *sic 'em* recharges
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 3 damage, and the target falls prone.

Skills Intimidate +11, Nature +14
Str 17 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+9)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 13 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, mace, whip

3 Banite Soldiers (S) **Level 10 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +6
AC 22, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, Will 22 **Perception** +7
Speed 5

Standard Actions

⊕ **Morningstar** (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 11 damage, plus 1 extra damage for each ally of the soldier adjacent to the target.

Str 16 (+8) **Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment chainmail, morningstar

2 War Hounds (W) **Level 9 Brute**
Medium natural beast XP 400 each

HP 116; **Bloodied** 58 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 5 damage, or 3d10 + 10 damage against a prone target, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 17). While the hound has a target grabbed, it can use *bite* only against that target.

Minor Actions

↓ **Pull Down** ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the hound); +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target falls prone.
Miss: The grab ends.

Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

4 Banite Bolters (B) **Level 10 Minion Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125 each

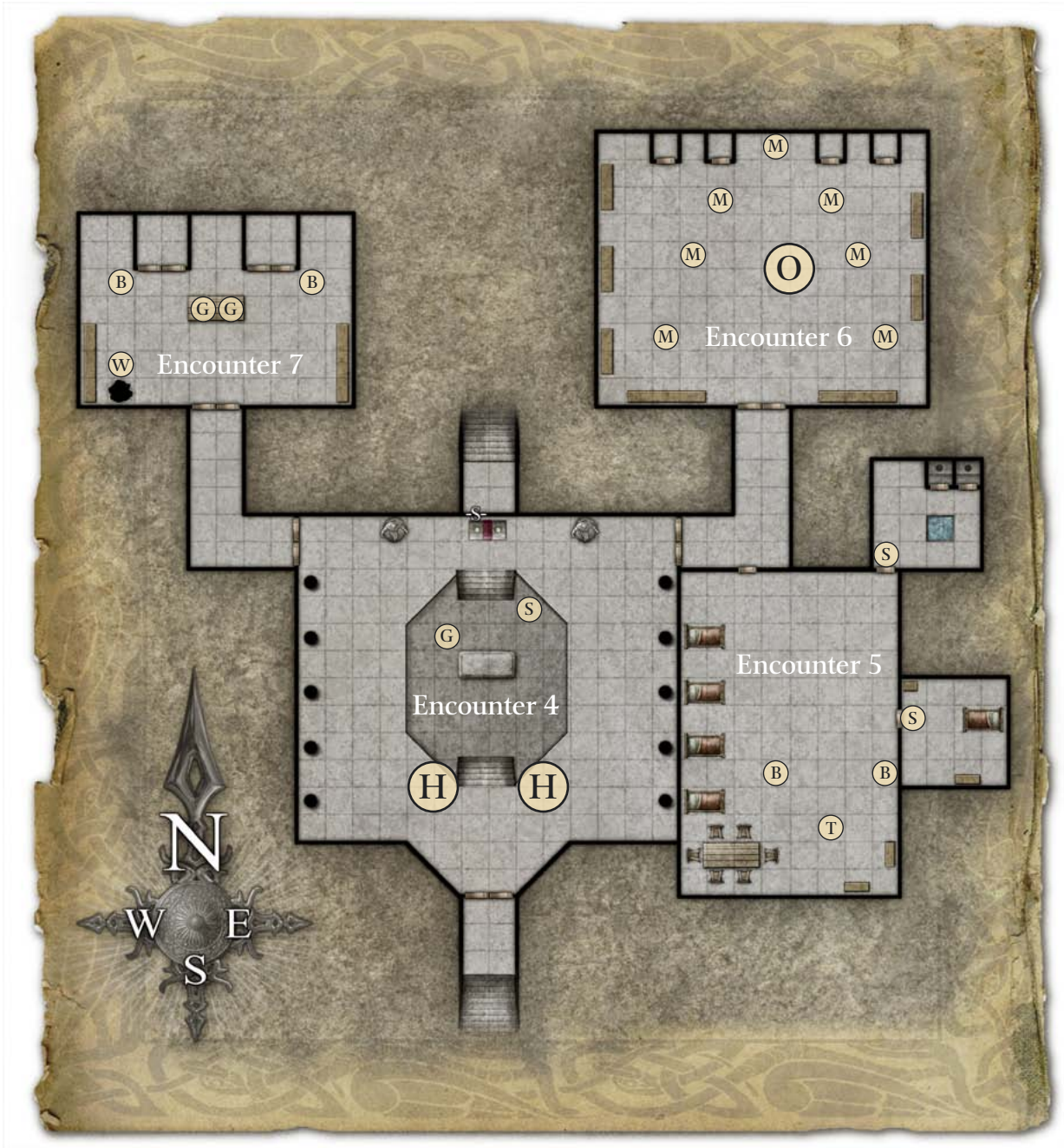
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +11
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊕ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 7 damage.

⊕ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage, or 11 damage if the bolter has any cover.

Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 17 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 11 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, short sword, crossbow, 20 bolts



Encounter 4: Profane Chapel

Encounter Level 11 (XP 3,325)

When the adventurers descend, read:
Stairs from the parade ground lead down steeply, terminating in a short hall lit by torches in sconces. A great set of doors, each carved from a solid piece of ebony, blocks further progress. The black hand of Bane is deeply etched on a red field in the center of each door. Cold dread rises in you as you consider opening those doors.

Beyond the double doors dwells the former high priest of Bane and current high priest of Shoth-Gorag, Garvan, alongside foulspawn created from other Banites. Garvan is unaware of the battle on the upper level. The foulspawn seer, however, is aware of some kind of disturbance above, so the seer is keeping an eye on the chapel doors.

Adventurers need to succeed on a DC 19 group Stealth check to surprise the monsters beyond the doors. If half or more of the characters succeed on the check, the party receives a surprise round.

Setup

Garvan, High Priest of Shoth-Gorag (G)
1 foulspawn seer (S)
2 foulspawn hulks (H)

When the adventurers enter the chapel, read:
The great double doors open onto a dimly lit chapel. Twisting columns line the east and west walls and a great altar flanked by a pair of statues stands against the north wall. The statues were once of Bane, but the likeness of the grim, militant god has been replaced by a tentacled, alien visage. In front of the altar and statues, in the center of the chapel, short stairways lead down to a black basalt slab fitted with manacles. Old bloodstains are visible on the floor near the

slab. Sets of double doors on either side of the chapel lead off to the east and west.

Four horrific monsters stand within the chapel. One is a blubbery humanoid with a bone staff, and two others look like fanged giants without skin. The fourth is a bearded, deformed human who wears remnants of chainmail and a symbol of Bane. His armor is torn open to allow his two tentacles to move freely.

2 Foulspawn Hulks (H) **Level 12 Brute**
Large aberrant humanoid XP 700 each

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75 **Initiative** +8
AC 24, Fortitude **27** (29 while bloodied), **Reflex** 22, Will 22 **Perception** +9
Speed 8 Low-light vision
Immune fear

Standard Actions

⨁ **Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +17 vs. AC, or +19 vs. AC while the hulk is bloodied.
Hit: 3d8 + 12 damage, or 4d8 + 15 damage while the hulk is bloodied.

Str 24 (+13)	**Dex** 14 (+8)	**Wis** 7 (+4)
Con 20 (+11)	**Int** 7 (+4)	**Cha** 14 (+8)

Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10

Garvan, High Priest of Shoth-Gorag (G) **Level 11 Elite Controller**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 1,200

HP 228; **Bloodied** 114 **Initiative** +6
AC 25, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Mind Mire** ✦ **Aura** 2
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Heavy Mace** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 8 damage.

✧ **Mind-Bending Whispers** (psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +14 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes ongoing 15 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).

Minor Actions

✧ **Compelling Whispers** (charm) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Close burst 2 (dazed enemies in the burst); Garvan slides the target up to 3 squares.

ǂ **Grasping Tentacles** ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Melee 3 (one or two creatures); +14 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Garvan slides the target up to 3 squares. If Garvan slides a target adjacent to him, he can use *heavy mace* against it once as a free action.

Skills Arcana +13, Intimidate +15, Religion +13

Str 17 (+8)	**Dex** 12 (+6)	**Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 18 (+9)	**Int** 16 (+8)	**Cha** 21 (+10)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Equipment chainmail, heavy mace

Foulspawn Seer (S) **Level 11 Artillery (Leader)**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 600

HP 86; **Bloodied** 43 **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

☼ **Foul Insight** ✦ **Aura** 10
Any ally in the aura that can hear the seer gains a +2 power bonus to one attack roll, skill check, ability check, or saving throw on its turn.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Twisted Staff** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage, and the seer can push the target 1 square.

➢ **Warp Orb** (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is instead dazed (save ends).

✧ **Distortion Blast** ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +14 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). If the target is aberrant, the damage is halved.

Move Actions

Teleport (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The seer teleports up to 3 squares.

Triggered Actions

Bend Space (teleportation) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Trigger: An attack hits the seer.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The seer teleports up to 3 squares.

Str 10 (+5)	**Dex** 14 (+7)	**Wis** 8 (+4)
Con 14 (+7)	**Int** 22 (+11)	**Cha** 18 (+9)

Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Equipment staff

Tactics

When combat begins, the foulspawn hulks charge forward to engage the adventurers in melee. Garvan follows them, but the foulspawn seer remains behind the basalt slab. Garvan opens with *mindbending whispers*, then uses *compelling whispers* to slide foes away from him and closer to the hulks. The foulspawn seer begins combat with *distortion blast* but tries to avoid hitting the hulks with the attack.

In later rounds, the foulspawn seer uses *warp orb* while keeping as many allies as possible in its *foul insight* aura. It avoids melee combat unless cornered. Garvan moves toward ranged attackers and uses *grasping tentacles* to pull those enemies within range of his or the hulk's melee attacks.

The foulspawn fight to the death. If all of the foulspawn are slain and he is bloodied, Garvan retreats to the barracks (see Encounter 5).

Features of the Area

Altar: The altar is 8 feet long, 2 feet high, 2 feet deep. It is difficult terrain, and it is suffused with Far Realm energy (Arcana DC 18 to detect). Behind the altar is a locked secret door that leads to the pit of Shoth-Gorag (see Encounter 8). The altar can roll to the side when the secret door behind it opens, allowing easier access to the open passage.

A character can ascertain that the altar can roll to one side with a successful DC 18 Perception check. Finding the secret door and its opening lever then requires another successful DC 18 Perception check. If the characters fail the first check, finding the secret door and lever requires a successful DC 26 Perception check.

Once the lever is pulled, the altar rolls to the right and the secret door swings open on hidden hinges. However, moving the altar also triggers a trap Shoth-Gorag and Garvan placed. Only they know about the trap and can activate the mechanism safely.

The door closes and the altar returns to its normal position after 3 rounds unless one or both are somehow prevented from doing so. A hidden switch in the passage beyond the secret door (DC 18 Perception check to find) allows one to open and close the secret door from inside, which does not trigger the trap.

Far Transport	**Level 10 Minion Trap**
Object	XP 125
Detect Arcana DC 18	**Initiative** –
Immune attacks	
Triggered Actions	
✧ **Attack** (psychic, teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: A creature other than Garvan or Shoth-Gorag uses the lever to open the secret door.	
Effect (No Action): Close burst 5 (creatures in the burst); 5 psychic damage, and the target is teleported to the torture chamber (see Encounter 7).	
Countermeasures	
✦ **Unlock:** Thievery DC 26. *Success:* The character opens the secret door without using the lever. *Failure (21 or lower):* The trap triggers.	
✦ **Suppress:** Arcana DC 26. *Success:* The character suppresses the magical energy on the altar so that the trap doesn't trigger when the secret door is opened. *Failure (21 or lower):* The trap triggers.	

Pillars: A pillar can provide cover.

Pit with Basalt Slab: The pit is 5 feet deep. The basalt slab in the middle of it is 3 feet wide, 10 feet long, and 3 feet tall. It is difficult terrain.

Statues: These figures are blocking terrain.

Conclusion

Barracks Soldiers: If the characters take more than 10 minutes to reach Encounter 5, the barracks occupants might come looking for intruders. These creatures spend a few moments investigating any carnage the characters leave behind before moving on to find the invaders. They might show up just after the characters finish a short rest in another area.

Garvan

Encounter 5: Temple Barracks

Encounter Level 9 (XP 2,100)

Setup

1 tainted warpriest (T)
2 tainted scouts (S)
2 foulspawn berserkers (B)

Use the map on page 12 to run this encounter.

This barracks houses guards and their leader, a tainted warpriest named Dasharr. Although the walls are thick in the temple, the scouts here heard the battle in the chapel and made ready for intruders. Monster locations on the map reflects this awareness.

When the adventurers can see the room, read:
This barracks contains four beds, a large table and chairs, various cabinets for storage, and a number of armor stands and weapon racks.

Standing in the middle of the room is a figure in red chainmail, a mace clenched in his hands. His face is covered in tiny tentacles like writhing worms, and his eyes are black. Flanking this creature are two bulky humanoids, who heft their greatswords and gurgle in anticipation. Each has gray skin, massive muscles, beady glowing eyes, and a fanged maw.

All three warriors wear the symbol of Bane.

When the scouts emerge, read:
A pair of humans in leather armor and armed with short swords rush into the room. They also bear strange deformities and wear the symbol of Bane.

Tainted Warpriest (T)	**Level 10 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 500
HP 105; **Bloodied** 52	**Initiative** +7
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23	**Perception** +5
Speed 5	
Traits	
☼ **Disquieting Presence** (fear) ✦ **Aura** 2	
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws.	
Standard Actions	
⨺ **Mace** (fear, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage.	
Effect: The warpriest slides the target up to 3 squares.	
⨷ **Grasping Terror** (fear, implement, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d8 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead immobilized (save ends).	
✧ **Force Tremor** (fear, force, implement) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +13 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d6 + 10 force damage, and the warpriest pushes the target up to 3 squares and knocks it prone.	
Skills Intimidate +15, Religion +11	
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+5)	
Con 17 (+8) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+10)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment chainmail, mace, holy symbol	

Tactics

The berserkers begin their assault with *berserker charge*. The warpriest Dasharr opens with *force tremor*, then favors melee combat. If need be, the scouts delay so they can enter the fray after the party is engaged. They favor rear-rank targets and those whom they can flank.

As the battle progresses, the berserkers and scouts move about the battlefield, attempting to flank foes. The berserkers continue to charge, risking opportunity attacks if necessary.

Creatures here fight to the death.

2 Tainted Scouts (S)	**Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 400 each
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	**Initiative** +11
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20	**Perception** +8
Speed 6	
Traits	
Disquieting Movement	
The scout has a +2 bonus to all defenses during its turn.	
Standard Actions	
⨺ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 9 damage, or 2d6 + 14 if the scout has combat advantage against the target.	
Effect: The scout shifts 1 square after the attack.	
⨺ **Brutal Stab** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature the scout is flanking or one prone creature); +14 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).	
Move Actions	
Swift Repositioning ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Effect: The scout shifts up to half its speed.	
Skills Athletics +10, Intimidate +11, Stealth +14	
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 8 (+3)	
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 15 (+6)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment leather armor, short sword	

Features of the Area

The warpriest's personal quarters and a small latrine are accessible through a door in the east wall and the north wall, respectively.

Cabinets: The lockers in the southeast corner of the main room are unlocked and contain personal items. A cabinet in Dasharr's room is locked (Thievery DC 17 to open; Athletics DC 25 to break). It contains his personal effects.

Pools: The bathing pool in the latrine is 2 feet deep and difficult terrain.

Tables: A creature can jump atop one of these oak tables as part of a move action (Athletics DC 18).

2 Foulspawn Berserkers (B)	Level 9 Soldier
Medium aberrant humanoid	XP 400 each
HP 102; **Bloodied** 51	**Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23 (25 while bloodied), Reflex 20, **Will** 20	**Perception** +0 Low-light vision
Speed 7 (9 while bloodied)	
Immune fear	
Traits	
☼ **Berserker Aura ✦ Aura** 1	
When a creature in the aura makes a melee attack, it must choose its target at random from the potential targets in range.	
Mental Feedback (psychic)	
Whenever a creature targets the berserker with a charm attack, the creature and the berserker each take 10 psychic damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Greatsword** (weapon) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC, or +16 vs. AC while the berserker is bloodied	
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage, or 2d10 + 10 damage while the berserker is bloodied.	
⸸ **Berserker Charge ✦ At-Will**	
Effect: The berserker charges, and the charge attack deals 5 extra damage on a hit.	
Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 3 (+0)	
Con 22 (+10) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+5)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10	
Equipment greatsword	

Conclusion

Dasharr carries the key to the armory on the upper level, as well as the key to his storage cabinet.

Encounter 6: Reliquary

Encounter Level 11 (XP 3,000)

Setup

1 giant object mimic (O)
7 giant mimic whelps (M)

Use the map on page 12 to run this encounter.

This room houses texts and items sacred to Bane. Most items stored here are of esoteric value. However, the reliquary's most recent addition is a potent Banite warhammer named *Farbane* and its guardians, the giant object mimic Ithgok and its spawn.

When the adventurers can see the room, read:
A tremendous slab of basalt dominates the center of this wide chamber, and upon the slab rests a glowing warhammer of violet metal. Arranged about the slab are several wooden tables displaying various relics and icons. Lining the east and west walls are shelves packed with tomes, candles, and other religious items. Against the far wall stand five heavy wooden cabinets.

Perception DC 29: *One of the nearby tables wiggles—it's some sort of creature.*

When the mimics attack, read:
The great basalt block writhes, its surface taking on the appearance of wet, gray clay. A wide maw opens in the block, and tentacles sprout from it. Around the room, other smaller furnishings undergo a similar transformation.

The mimics prefer to surprise intruders, but they attack if one or more of them is discovered. See the Tactics section.

Giant Object Mimic (O)	Level 13 Elite Lurker
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 1,600
HP 208; **Bloodied** 104	**Initiative** +12
AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 25	**Perception** +16
Speed 5	Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Resist 10 acid	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Ambush	
The mimic deals 3d6 extra damage against surprised foes.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Slam ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Crushing Tendrils** (acid) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature, or two creatures if the mimic has no creatures grabbed); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 7 damage, and the mimic grabs the target (escape DC 25) until the end of the mimic's next turn.	
Sustain Standard: Each grab persists until the end of the mimic's next turn, and each grabbed target takes 15 acid damage.	
Minor Actions	
⸸ **Ravening Maw ✦ At-Will** (1/round)	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature grabbed by the mimic); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 7 damage.	
Shapeshift (polymorph) **✦ At-Will** (1/round)	
Effect: The mimic assumes one of the following forms without changing its size. It remains in the chosen form until it uses this power again.	
Ooze Form: The mimic becomes an ooze. When it squeezes while in this form, it moves its full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Object Form: While in this form, the mimic has resist 15 to all damage, is immobilized, and cannot attack. In addition, a creature must succeed on a DC 29 Perception check to notice that the mimic is a creature.	
Skills Bluff +13, Stealth +13	
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 21 (+11)	
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 19 (+10) **Cha** 15 (+8)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Deep Speech	

7 Giant Mimic Whelps (M) Level 13 Minion Lurker
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 200 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +13
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 **Perception** +14
Immune acid Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Speed 6

Traits

Ambush
The mimic deals 5 extra damage against surprised foes.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Minor Actions

Shapeshift (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: The mimic assumes one of the following forms without changing its size. It remains in the chosen form until it uses this power again.
Ooze Form: The mimic becomes an ooze. When it squeezes while in this form, it moves its full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.
Object Form: While in this form, the mimic has resist 15 to all damage, is immobilized, and cannot attack. In addition, a creature must succeed on a DC 29 Perception check to notice that the mimic is a creature.

Skills Stealth +14
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 17 (+9)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 15 (+8) **Cha** 13 (+7)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Deep Speech

Tactics

If possible, Ithgok waits for several adventurers to move within range of its *crushing tendrils* before it and its whelps attack. If *Farbane* is still resting atop Ithgok when the mimics attack, Ithgok swallows the hammer as a minor action before attacking (see below for what happens later).

As the battle progresses, Ithgok uses *crushing tendrils* when it has fewer than two enemies in its clutches. The mimic whelps focus their attacks on grabbed targets.

If Ithgok is reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, it disgorges *Farbane* and uses *shapeshift* to return to its object form. The whelps follow suit, returning to object form. Ithgok hopes the adventurers take the hammer and leave it be. If the adventurers press the attack, Ithgok and its spawn fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Book Shelves: The shelves lining the east and west walls in this area are 8 feet high and can be climbed (Athletics DC 13). They contain sacred texts that are worth little except to followers of Bane.

Cabinets: These four walk-in cabinets are each 5 feet deep and 8 feet high. They can be climbed (Athletics DC 13). Each contains items used in the worship of Bane.

Treasure: *Farbane*.

Farbane Level 14 Rare

This stout hammer is forged, head to haft, of a strange violet metal. The symbol of Bane adorns the head and pommel, and the haft is wrapped in mottled leather.

Weapon: Warhammer 21,000 gp
Enhancement Bonus: +3 to attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +3d8 damage, or +3d10 damage against aberrant creatures

Properties

✦ When within 10 squares of an aberrant creature, *Farbane* sheds dim light out to 2 squares. You can suppress or resume this light as a minor action.
✦ You gain resist 10 psychic.
✦ You gain a +3 item bonus to damage rolls made against aberrant creatures.

Attack Power ✦ Daily (No Action)
Trigger: You hit an enemy with a melee weapon attack using *Farbane*.
Effect: The enemy takes 1[W] extra damage. If the enemy is an aberrant creature, it instead takes 2[W] extra damage, and this power recharges. You can use this power only once per encounter.

Encounter 7: Torture Chamber

Encounter Level 9 (XP 2,200)

Setup

1 foulspawn warpcaller (W)
2 foulspawn grues (G)
2 foulspawn berserkers (B)

Use the map on page 12 to run this encounter.

This room serves as a jail and torture chamber. Monsters here are intent on their task, so they fail to notice battle elsewhere in the temple. However, the adventurers still need to succeed on a DC 19 group Stealth check to surprise the monsters. If half or more of the characters succeed on the check, the characters receive a surprise round.

The trap in Encounter 4 might teleport the adventurers into the cells here. If the party teleports in, the foulspawn still attack. They use their powers to teleport weak-looking foes into the open room, leaving tough-looking opponents behind bars.

If the characters enter through the doors, read:
Racks along the walls here hold various instruments of torture. A wooden table fitted with straps and manacles sits in the center of the room, and behind it is a pair of prison cells with doors of iron bars. Each cell contains two wounded humans. A dark hole opens in the floor near the south wall.

If the characters teleport in, read:
You arrive inside prison cells that have doors of iron bars. Each cell contains two wounded humans. Outside the cells, racks along the walls hold various instruments of torture. A wooden table fitted with straps and manacles sits in the center of the room. A dark hole opens in the floor near the south wall.

In either case, read:

Squatting atop the wooden table are two stunted humanoids with sharp claws and maniacal grins. Guarding the cells are two massively muscled gray humanoids that wield greatswords and wear tattered tabards with Bane's symbol on them. A blubbery humanoid that has rippling skin and a musical pipe in hand sits near the hole.

2 Foulspawn Grues (G) **Level 8 Controller**
Small aberrant humanoid XP 350

HP 87; **Bloodied** 43 **Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +5
Speed 4 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 9 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is instead dazed (save ends).

Whispers of Madness (psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Ranged 5 (one nondeafened creature); +11 vs. Will
Hit: 4d6 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is instead dazed (save ends).

Move Actions

Teleport (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The grue teleports up to 4 squares.

Minor Actions

Mind Worm ✦ **Recharge** when the target saves against this power
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. Will
Hit: The target is slowed and takes a -2 penalty to Will (save ends both).

Skills Stealth +13
Str 8 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+8) **Wis** 3 (+0)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+7)
Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10

Foulspawn Warpcaller (W) **Level 12 Controller (Leader)**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 700

HP 126; **Bloodied** 63 **Initiative** +9
AC 26, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 24 **Perception** +9
Speed 6, teleport 3 Darkvision

Traits

Droning Pipe ✦ **Aura** 3
Enemies in the aura gain vulnerable 5 psychic.

Standard

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage.

Warped Sending (psychic, teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and one of the warpcaller's aberrant allies within 5 squares of the target teleports to a square adjacent to the target.

Twisted Dismissal (psychic, teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends). The warpcaller then teleports the target 2 squares.

Warpmind Field (psychic, zone) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Area burst 2 within 5 (enemies in burst); +15 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + 6 psychic damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the warpcaller's next turn. Any enemy that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 10 psychic damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn. In addition, any enemy within the zone can attack only targets within 3 squares of it. As a move action, the warpcaller can move the zone up to 4 squares.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists until the end of the warpcaller's next turn.

Skills Arcana +15
Str 19 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 17 (+9)
Con 22 (+12) **Int** 18 (+10) **Cha** 19 (+10)
Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Equipment musical pipe

2 Foulspawn Berserkers (B) **Level 9 Soldier**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 400 each

HP 102; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23 (25 while bloodied), Reflex 20, **Will** 20 **Perception** +0
Speed 7 (9 while bloodied) Low-light vision
Immune fear

Traits

Berserker Aura ✦ **Aura** 1
When a creature in the aura makes a melee attack, it must choose its target at random from the potential targets in range.

Mental Feedback (psychic)
Whenever a creature targets the berserker with a charm attack, the creature and the berserker each take 10 psychic damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Greatsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC, or +16 vs. AC while the berserker is bloodied
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage, or 2d10 + 10 damage while the berserker is bloodied.

Berserker Charge ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The berserker charges, and the charge attack deals 5 extra damage on a hit.

Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 3 (+0)
Con 22 (+10) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Equipment greatsword

Tactics

The warpcaller and grues focus on ranged attackers. Grues use *mind worm* to weaken a foe's Will before assailing it with *whispers of madness*. When cornered or flanked, they escape via *teleport*. The warpcaller uses its teleportation powers to keep enemies away from it and the grues but near the berserkers. When it uses *warpmind field*, the warpcaller places the origin square so the zone forces foes out of the hallway or affects the largest number of enemies in the room.

Berserkers charge into melee. They willingly take great risks to defend the grues and warpcaller.

Banites

If freed during the combat, the Banite soldiers are willing to fight if asked to do so. Use the Banite soldier statistics (page 9) but reduce damage by 3 if the soldier is unarmed. Allow the players to control the soldiers' actions, stepping in only if the chosen action is suicidal for the soldier.

Unless the Banites join the battle, when targeting their powers, the foulspawn do not consider the Banite prisoners to be enemies.

Features of the Area

Cells: Each cell has doors of 1-inch-thick iron bars. The bars are spaced 6 inches apart, providing cover if the bars are between an attacker and its target. The doors are locked (Thievery DC 18 to open; Athletics DC 31 to break).

Hole: This opening in the floor descends in a decline down to Shoth-Gorag's lair about 50 feet below. It is wide enough to accommodate a crawling Medium creature, but it is slimy with old gore.

Racks: These wooden racks contain instruments of torture. The various blades, pokers, and hooks function as daggers or clubs in combat, but they are enough to arm the Banite soldiers.

Table: This blood-spattered torture table is bolted to the floor. A creature can jump atop the table as part of a move action (Athletics DC 18).

Prisoners

Despite their wickedness and loyalty to Bane, these captives are grateful to be rescued. However, they do not completely trust the adventurers. Roleplay the scene as the characters interact with the Banites, perhaps including some of the optional skill checks shown below. Each time the characters make a good case or succeed on an optional check, they gain a new piece of information from the Banites.

Diplomacy (DC 13): The character reassures the Banites that they and the party share a common goal.

Dungeoneering (DC 18): The character uses knowledge of the Far Realm to drive home the danger that Shoth-Gorag represents.

Heal (DC 13): The character eases the Banites' pain and tends their wounds, deepening their gratefulness to the party.

Intimidate (DC 18): The character threatens the Banites or leverages their fear of Shoth-Gorag.

Religion (DC 13): The character uses an understanding of Bane's tenets to influence the Banites into assisting those whom Yorven believed to be sent by the deity.

Information Gains

The Banites are willing to help their liberators with information. They know the following facts:

- A secret door is hidden behind the altar in the main chapel. The door has a magical trap, but the Banites don't know the trap's function. They know that Shoth-Gorag dwells beyond the secret door, but they know nothing about the layout of the pit. With this information, characters can easily find the secret door, and they gain a +4 bonus to checks to find and disable the trap.
- *Farbane* is in the reliquary, and a terrible gigantic creature and its spawn guard the weapon. These creatures can take the shape of objects. The DC to see the mimics for what they are lowers to 20 for the characters.
- The hole in this room is a chute to an unknown location. When a prisoner became too incoherent to merit further suffering, the foulspawn threw the unfortunate down the chute. The soldiers here are all that remain of about a dozen loyal Banites.
- The Banites might know where other treasures you have placed are hidden in the fortress.

Unlikely Allies

It's up to you whether the Banites can be persuaded to join the characters in the battle against other enemies here. They are inclined to leave the fortress and unwilling to do further battle without arms and armor. Any soldiers allowed to leave make for the surface and escape. If they learn that Yorven has gone to Restwell Keep, they join him there.

Conclusion

Each foulspawn grue has a key to one cell. The warpcaller has the key to both cells.

Encounter 8: The Thing That Should Not Be

Encounter Level 13 (XP 4,000)

Setup

Shoth-Gorag (G)
1 creeping spawn (C)
1 reaching spawn (R)
1 slithering spawn (S)

If the adventurers brave the chute that leads from the torture chamber, see Features of the Area and describe their entrance as you see fit.

Otherwise, when the adventurers enter, read:
A long stairway leads to a short hall that ends at a stone platform overlooking a great cavern. Stone stairs lead down to the cavern floor, which has a few shallow crevices in it. A blue glow emanates from a rift suspended in the air above the cavern's center.

A writhing mass of tentacles, appendages, eyes, and mouths is connected to the rift. The mass fills the cavern with the deafening shriek of a thousand raving voices and sends out questing tentacles in your direction.

Foul creatures, mostly fleshy tentacles and fanged maws with hints of other creatures mixed in, writhe and wriggle near the huge mass. They also screech and begin to slither toward you.

Shoth-Gorag and its spawn attack immediately.

When Shoth-Gorag uses *create spawn* for the first time, read:
One side of the huge mass bursts open in a spray of fluid. From this dripping wound, a wretched abomination of tentacles and fanged maws slithers free.

Shoth-Gorag (G) **Level 13 Solo Brute**
Huge aberrant magical beast XP 4,000

HP 520; **Bloodied** 260 **Initiative** +6
AC 25, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 27 **Perception** +14
Speed 4 All-around vision, darkvision
Immune charm, dazed, dominated, stunned; **Resist** 10 acid
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

All-Around Vision
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking Shoth-Gorag.

Font of Madness (psychic)
Any non-aberrant creature that starts its turn within line of sight of Shoth-Gorag takes 5 psychic damage.

Threatening Reach
Shoth-Gorag can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares of it.

Standard Actions

Tentacle ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 + 12 damage, and Shoth-Gorag grabs the target (escape DC 20).

Tentacle Flurry ✦ At-Will
Effect: Shoth-Gorag uses *tentacle* three times.

Fleshwarp ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in the burst); +16 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Minor Actions

Create Spawn ✦ At-Will (1/round)
Effect: In an unoccupied square adjacent to it, Shoth-Gorag creates one spawn of its choice: creeping, reaching, or slithering. Shoth-Gorag can normally have only two spawn of each type (up to six spawn) in play at a time, but while bloodied, it can have up to three spawn of each type (up to nine spawn) in play at a time.

Dissolving Tentacles (acid) **✦ At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Each creature grabbed by Shoth-Gorag takes 10 acid damage.

Triggered Actions

Horrific Genesis ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Shoth-Gorag is first bloodied.
Effect: Shoth-Gorag uses *create spawn* three times.

Str 23 (+12)	**Dex** 10 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 18 (+10)	**Int** 19 (+10)	**Cha** 21 (+11)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20

Creeping Spawn (C) **Level 13 Minion Controller**
Medium aberrant beast XP –

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +8
AC 27, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +5
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune acid

Standard Actions

Foul Tentacle (fear) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.
Effect: The spawn slides the target up to 2 squares.

Str 14 (+8)	**Dex** 14 (+8)	**Wis** 8 (+5)
Con 16 (+9)	**Int** 3 (+2)	**Cha** 18 (+10)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** understands Deep Speech

Reaching Spawn (R) **Level 13 Minion Artillery**
Medium aberrant beast XP –

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 25 **Perception** +10
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune acid

Standard Actions

Far Tentacle ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 10 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Str 13 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+9)	**Wis** 8 (+5)
Con 14 (+8)	**Int** 3 (+2)	**Cha** 18 (+10)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** understands Deep Speech

Slithering Spawn (S) **Level 13 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium aberrant beast XP –

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +12
AC 27, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23 **Perception** +5
Speed 8 Darkvision
Immune acid, all damage dealt to the spawn during its turn

Standard Actions

Raking Tentacle ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage, or 12 damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the spawn.

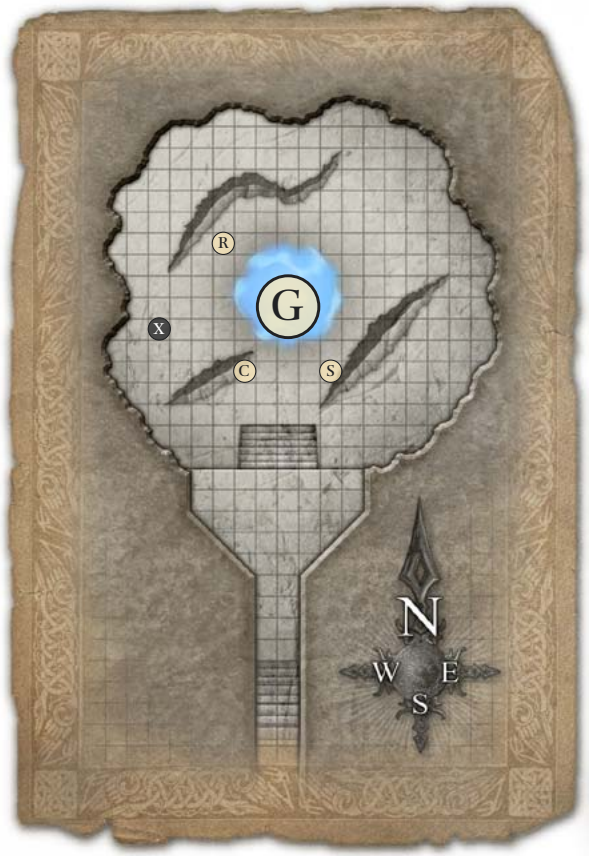
Str 16 (+9)	**Dex** 18 (+10)	**Wis** 8 (+5)
Con 14 (+8)	**Int** 3 (+2)	**Cha** 14 (+8)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** understands Deep Speech

Tactics

Shoth-Gorag grabs foes, and it uses *threatening reach* to discourage enemy movement. The creature rarely moves unless it needs to reach a ranged attacker. It instead prefers to use *create spawn* to replenish destroyed minions, and then trade a move action for a minor to use *dissolving tentacles* on those it is grabbing. If it has to choose, Shoth-Gorag favors *create spawn*.

Shoth-Gorag's spawn focus on those their master isn't currently grabbing. They direct their attacks especially at enemies that use ranged attacks, and they work together to gain combat advantage and to herd foes toward Shoth-Gorag. When Shoth-Gorag dies, all its spawn are immediately destroyed.



Features of the Area

Illumination: The rift dimly lights this area.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet high.

Chute (X): This tunnel from the prison enters the pit here, 30 feet from the cavern floor. One Small or Medium creature can lurk in this narrow opening, but is prone and blocks line of sight for those farther inside the chute while doing so.

Crevices: These fissures are difficult terrain.

Platform: This raised area is 10 feet above the cavern floor (Athletics DC 18 to climb).

Stairs: The stairway from the platform to the cavern floor is difficult terrain to a creature ascending them. Stairs up to Level 2 are difficult terrain.

Rift: This opening to the Far Realm occupies a square 15 feet above the floor. When Shoth-Gorag dies, any creature that ends its turn within 15 feet of the rift is pulled 5 feet upward toward the rift. A creature pulled adjacent to the rift tumbles into the Far Realm and is destroyed. A character holding *Farbane* feels the rift's pull but moves only if willing to do so.

Conclusion

When Shoth-Gorag drops to 0 hit points, read:

The unearthly monstrosity shrieks, and its flesh dissolves into putrescent slime. Its spawn quickly liquefy into pools of disgusting ichor. Left behind is a chunk of black stone, roughly 3 feet in diameter, that pulses with a fell blue radiance. The blue rift in space still flickers menacingly.

Shoth-Gorag's heart weighs 450 pounds and is all that remains of the meteor that fell centuries ago and carved the Chaos Scar. A DC 18 Dungeoneering check reveals that Shoth-Gorag can eventually regrow its body unless its heart is destroyed.

To ensure that Shoth-Gorag never does so, the adventurers must use *Farbane* to strike the heart and destroy it. When the characters do so, proceed with Encounter 9.

Encounter 9: Flee!

Encounter Level 10 (XP 2,500)

When *Farbane* strikes the heart, read:

Shoth-Gorag's heart shatters into powder. Above, the blue rift in reality winks out. A deep rumble shakes the cavern. Massive chunks of stone begin to fall from the ceiling as the ground buckles with terrible energy.

Destroying the heart abruptly closes the rift to the Far Realm, releasing anyone suspended in the air and unleashing a tremendous amount of energy. This energy sets off a series of earthquakes that begins to bring the entire complex crashing down.

Characters have only a few minutes to escape the destruction of Hallowgaunt. The entire fortress is collapsing. To represent the desperate flight from the fortress, you can run the following skill challenge.

Escape Hallowgaunt

The characters are immediately aware that Hallowgaunt is collapsing around them. They have to escape or risk being crushed under the falling fortress.

Level: 10 (2,500 XP).

Complexity: Special (12 successful group Endurance checks before 20 rounds expire)

Time: Each group Endurance check represents 1 round of progress, and each secondary check is a standard action. Adventurers have 20 rounds before the fortress crashes down. The countdown begins at the start of the initiative count on the round after the adventurers destroy the heart of Shoth-Gorag.

Primary Checks: This skill challenge uses a group DC 18 Endurance check as the primary check. All the characters push their bodies to the limit in their mad flight. If at least half the characters in the party succeed on the group check, the party earns one success in the skill challenge.

Secondary Checks: Once before each group Endurance check, each character can use a secondary skill to attempt a DC 18 check. A successful check with a secondary skill grants each character a +1 bonus to the group Endurance check. Secondary Skills include Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Dungeoneering, Nature, Perception, and any other skill for which a player can make a creative case. Use these checks to help weave a narrative of the escape.

Acrobatics: The character dodges through narrowing gaps last, allowing others to move ahead first.

Arcana (trained only): The character channels the violently dispersing magical energy to slow the tremors' nearby effects.

Athletics: The character climbs, jumps, or forces past obstacles quickly, helping others advance. The character might force open the outer gates of Hallowgaunt as a final check.

Dungeoneering: The character spots weaknesses in the passages, helping the party avoid poor paths.

Nature (primal power source required; trained only): With the help of primal earth spirits, the character stabilizes the nearby ground, giving the party a little more time.

Perception: The character sees the clearest way through the debris and falling dust.

Splitting Up: If any character decides to spend a standard action healing a fallen comrade, searching for treasure, or performing some other task that doesn't directly aid in the party's escape, the whole group that character is with loses 1 round. This fact is readily apparent to the characters and, by extension, the players.

The party can split up, leaving behind those who tarry. Each time this happens, the character or characters left behind become a separate group, and the new group's successes are tracked separately from then on.

Success

If a fleeing group accumulates 12 successes before the 20 rounds have expired, the group escapes the crumbling fortress with only superficial injuries.

If a group escapes, read:

Your mad flight through the fortress has brought you safely beyond the walls of Hallowgaunt. Moments after you make it clear, the citadel crumbles downward in a massive implosion of dust and rock.

Failure

Characters in a group that fails the skill challenge do not escape the collapsing fortress in time. Each adventurer in a group that fails takes damage equal to his or her bloodied value plus 3d10 damage. Use this damage and the number of successes the group accumulated to help you decide in what conditions the adventurers find themselves after the collapse.

For example, a character who is knocked unconscious could be trapped under fallen debris and require rescue. A group that had 8 or more successes might be on the surface but inside Hallowgaunt's walls when the citadel implodes. Such a group is close enough to the surface to escape after the fall. A group with fewer than 8 successes might instead be entombed in some corner of the fortress and left to search for another way out. Perhaps they fall all the way into the caverns below Hallowgaunt, with no choice but to explore until they reach an exit.

About the Author

Aeryn Rudel is a freelance writer. He kicked off the Chaos Scar series with "Stick in the Mud" (*Dungeon* 171), so it was fitting that he should end it.

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Steading of the Hill Giant Chief

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 12-14

By Christopher Perkins

Based on the original by Gary Gygax

Illustrations by Eric Belisle, Noah Bradley and Goran Josic
Cartography by Mike Schley

Introduction

The original *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief* adventure was written by Gary Gygax and published in 1978 by TSR, Inc. Part one of a three-part series, it packed a lot of punch into eight pages and presented hill giants as iconic D&D® monsters. The tripartite "Giants" series was later collected into a single adventure module titled *Against the Giants*, published by TSR in 1981.

This adventure is inspired by Gary Gygax's classic module but uses the latest *Dungeons & Dragons*®

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Roleplaying Game rules. It is designed for characters of levels 12–14.

"Steading of the Hill Giant Chief" can be run as a stand-alone adventure, or you can play it as the first part of a four-part series that continues with "Warrens of the Stone Giant Thane" (*Dungeon* 198), "Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl" (*Dungeon* 199), and "Hall of the Fire Giant King" (*Dungeon* 200).

Adventure Background

Giants have been raiding the civilized lands in large bands, visiting death and destruction upon villages, towns, and farmlands. Entire militias have been conquered, whole crops wiped out. These marauding bands consist of mixed groups of hill giants, stone giants, frost giants, and fire giants, as well as ogres and other monsters allied with the giants.

Determined to repel the invaders, local lords have begun hiring brave adventuring parties. The first few groups didn't fare so well. Some were crushed beneath the boulders and jackboots of rampaging giants, while others went into the wilderness and never returned. However, a new band of adventurers has assembled to punish the marauding giants and banish them from the civilized lands!

The closest giant stronghold—and the greatest immediate threat to the safety of nearby settlements—is a great timber fortress populated by hill giants, known simply as the hill giant steading. Nosnra (pronounced *noz*-en-rah), a grossly fat and thoroughly despicable hill giant chief, rules from this stronghold. Sly and vicious, the hill giant chief routinely plunders farms, ambushes merchant caravans, and threatens trade roads. He has gathered ogres and other vile creatures to his banner and uses them as fodder during his brutal raids.

Nosnra's alliance with more powerful kinds of giants, such as frost giants and fire giants, is a matter of grave concern. Many suspect a sinister influence at work, a secret motivational power behind the unusual banding of different races of giants.

In exchange for their help, the characters are given all of the mundane adventuring equipment they require and are entitled to keep whatever treasure they find. They are advised to follow any clues that point toward the sinister hand suspected of uniting the giants. Only by shattering the alliance can they put down the giant uprising for good.

Beginning the Adventure

The hill giant steading is located among the secluded foothills of the Crystalmist Mountains. Feel free to change the steading's location and the name of the mountain range to better serve the needs of your home campaign. Suffice to say, the steading is close enough to the civilized lands to be a source of great concern.

It is assumed that the characters have safely arrived at a spot near the hill giants' stronghold—a small cave, well hidden, where they can remain undetected while they plan their offensive. If the party decides to take an extended rest between forays against the hill giant stronghold, they can rest safely at the hidden cave—provided they take moderate precautions not to leave a plain trail.

Quests

In addition to killing any foes they encounter in and below the hill giants' steading, the characters can pick up the following quests.

MAJOR QUEST: FIND THE HIDDEN STRONGHOLDS

13th-level Major Quest (800 XP/character)

The stone giants, frost giants, and fire giants have hidden strongholds in the mountains. Look for a map or some other clue that reveals where these allied strongholds are located.

A map hidden in the hill giant chief's treasury (area 12C) marks the locations of the Warrens of the Stone Giant Thane, the Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl, and the Hall of the Fire Giant King. The characters must retrieve the map to complete this quest.

MINOR QUEST: RESCUE ZANDOR CASKERHILL

13th-level Minor Quest (200 XP/character)

The hill giants have captured Zandor Caskerhill, a human merchant who has ties to the local nobility. Locate and rescue him.

Zandor is being detained in the dungeon below the steading (in area 7E) until Chief Nosnra decides whether to ransom him. The characters return him safely to civilization to complete this quest.

MINOR QUEST: FIND THE ABANDONED TEMPLE

13th-level Minor Quest (200 XP/character)

The hill giants built their stronghold atop an old dungeon complex, within which is rumored to be an abandoned temple. Find this temple, explore it, and bring back proof of your discovery.

The characters must find the abandoned temple in the dungeon (area 9C) and recover the gem from the altar to complete this quest.

SPECIAL QUEST: FREE THE DWARF SLAVES

Special Quest (see below)

The hill giants have captured several dwarves, and the dwarven clanholds have posted generous rewards for their safe return.

For each dwarf slave that the heroes escort safely from the steading, the party receives a 500 gp reward in lieu of XP.

Running the Adventure

This adventure is location-based. All the encounters are keyed to the maps of the hill giant's steading and the dungeon below it. As the characters explore these locations, refer to "The Steading" (below) for information on the contents of each room.

The adventure is designed to allow characters to take short rests between encounters. However, those needing an extended rest might need to withdraw from the dungeon to avoid incessant attacks.

The characters might be reluctant to yield ground and allow the giants to fortify their defenses while they take an extended rest, but that's the choice they must make. As the DM, you need to decide what happens while the characters take an extended rest, and the extent to which the giants recover from the characters' last assault. It is strongly advised that you not punish the characters for taking an extended rest by "reloading" every encounter. Instead, consider adding one group of reinforcements (see "Giant Reinforcements," below), and have the giants take a few sensible precautions to prepare for the characters' return.

Treasure

The treasure found in this adventure was assigned using the parcel technique of treasure distribution described in the *Rules Compendium*™ (page 298), ensuring that the characters get the appropriate amount of treasure for their level. Feel free to replace listed items with other items of similar level.

In addition to treasure, giants often possess mundane items of little worth. These items add color and realism to the adventure. As the characters loot corpses and plunder treasure chests, feel free to throw in a few items chosen or rolled randomly from the following table.

MUNDANE TREASURES

d20	Mundane Item
1	Handaxe blade (used as a hand chopper)
2	Metal helm (used as a bowl) and wooden spoon
3	Moldy and stinky wheel of cheese
4	Shabby cloak (wool or hide)
5	Bone comb
6	Iron cooking pot
7	Drinking horn
8	Skinning knife
9	Haunch of meat
10	Mangy fur pelt
11	Small bag of salt
12	Old sandals
13	Waterskin (full)
14	Cask of ale (half-empty)
15	Necklace of animal fangs or finger bones
16	5-foot length of chain
17	Bag of skulls
18	Bag of dried mushrooms
19	50-foot coil of hemp rope
20	Carved wooden idol

Giant Reinforcements

Not all of the hill giants who live in the steading are present when the characters attack. A number of them are out on raids and hunting expeditions, and each time the characters take an extended rest during their conquest of the steading, they run the risk of encountering reinforcements.

A typical "gang" of reinforcements includes three hill giants and eight bugbears. You should feel free to stage the encounter with these forces anywhere in and around the steading.

Use these encounters sparingly. Too many encounters with reinforcements will result in the characters amassing more XP and gaining levels faster than anticipated.

3 Hill Giants **Level 13 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 800 each

HP 159; **Bloodied** 79 **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +7
Speed 8

Standard Actions

⊕ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage.

⸸ **Sweeping Club** (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 2 (one or two creatures); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage, the giant pushes the target up to 2 squares and knocks it prone.

↛ **Hurl Rock** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.

Skills Athletics +16
Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment greatclub, 5 rocks

8 Bugbear Steading Hunters **Level 10 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +7
Speed 7 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Spear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The bugbear shifts 1 square before or after making the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage, or 12 damage if the bugbear has combat advantage against the target.

Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant, Goblin
Equipment leather armor, spear

Captured!

If the entire party is wiped out by the steading's defenders, the adventure isn't necessarily over. At your discretion, the characters can be stripped of

their gear and hauled off to the dungeon cellblock (area 7E) for safekeeping until Chief Nosnra figures out what to do with them.

More likely than not, characters who do not seize upon the chance to escape will be eaten. However, if the characters convince their captors that they are worth something alive, Nosnra might be tempted to ransom them or put them to work as slave labor in the mines (area 10), thus giving the heroes more time to plan their escape. Once they escape, the characters can try to recover their stolen gear, which is kept in area 7B.

Players whose characters were killed can create new characters, if they wish—survivors of another party captured by the giants.

Escaping captivity can be a skill challenge that uses the Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Perception, and Thievery skills (moderate DCs). No one skill can be used more than three times (successfully or not), and the party must achieve 6 successes before 3 failures to escape. If the characters fail the skill challenge, they can try again after an extended rest.

The Steading

When the characters first see the steading, read:
A massive timber stronghold hides among the hills. The well-worn trail that you've been following ends before a pair of 15-foot-high doors made of ironbound logs. Thicker logs comprise the walls of the stronghold. The wooden roof inclines toward the middle, reaching a height of 30 feet at its peak. The stronghold has no windows, but a squat watchtower overlooks the entrance. Smoke rises from numerous stone chimneys.

A log guardhouse stands apart from the main stronghold, but connected by a palisade wall of vertical logs 15 feet high. Heavy log doors set into the palisade lead to a courtyard lodged between the two buildings.

The hill giant stronghold has two levels: an upper level (areas 1–6) and a dungeon level (areas 7–12).

Upper Level Features (Areas 1–6)

The outer walls of the timber stronghold are fashioned from 5-foot-diameter logs laid horizontally. Inner walls use 3-foot-diameter vertical logs, and doors are ironbound log affairs 15 feet high, 6 feet wide, and 1 foot thick. The dirt floors are covered with stone tiles. Ceiling height varies from about 16 feet at the outer walls to 30 feet at the center. Blackened rafters support the roof.

Rain falls often in the hills, and mist settles over the steading at night. The wood is damp, and it doesn't ignite when exposed to fire (although it takes fire damage normally).

Climbing: A character can climb the outside walls of the steading (Athletics DC 14). Running or charging across the sloped rooftop requires a DC 14 Acrobatics check, and any character who fails this check falls prone and slides 1d4 squares toward the nearest outside wall.

Fireplaces: Smoky plumes rise from large stone fireplaces along the steading's outer walls. Sneaky characters can enter the stronghold by climbing down a chimney (Athletics DC 14). Any creature that enters a fire or starts its turn there takes 10 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

Heavy Doors: Opening a log door requires a DC 14 Athletics check because of the door's size and weight. A character can forgo the check by choosing to open the door as a standard action instead of a minor action.

Illumination: Giants and ogres need light to see, and there are no windows in most areas of the steading. Oil lanterns hanging from the rafters illuminate all rooms and hallways.

Oversized Furnishings: Most of the furnishings in the steading are sized for 12-foot-tall hill giants. Exceptions are noted in the text. Tables, benches, door handles, and other room fixtures are typically twice as high, long, and wide as their human-sized equivalents and roughly eight times the weight. Small and Medium creatures can scuttle under or clamber over giant-sized furniture, treating the squares they occupy as difficult terrain. The furniture can also provide cover.

Sneaking Through the Steading

The inhabitants of the steading are enjoying the success of their recent raids, and the last thing they expect is an attack on the stronghold. Characters can take advantage of the steading's lax defenses to sneak around unseen.

If the characters make an effort to sneak their way through the upper level and dungeon level of the steading, have each character make a Stealth check each time the party enters an occupied area. Compare the results to the passive Perception of the area's most perceptive inhabitant (or active Perception check, if the creature is actively guarding the area). If half or more of the characters beat the Perception check, the party moves through the area undetected.

If a character does anything that might draw attention to the party, such as picking a lock or snatching an item, the effort counts as a failure on the group skill check in that area.

If the characters try to bluff their way through the steading (by disguising themselves as orcs, for example), have them make group Bluff checks instead of Stealth checks.

1. Main Entrance

Combat Encounter Level 12 (3,700 XP)

If the characters approach the steading openly, the giants in the watchtower (area 1B) see them and strike a gong that wakes the sleeping guards below (in area 1A). Characters can lure the guards outside by hiding near the entrance. The guards are eager to fight and throw open the main doors with anticipation.

If the characters manage to sneak up to the main entrance undetected, they can quietly open the front doors and attempt to sneak past the sleeping guards inside (see the "Sneaking through the Steading" sidebar).

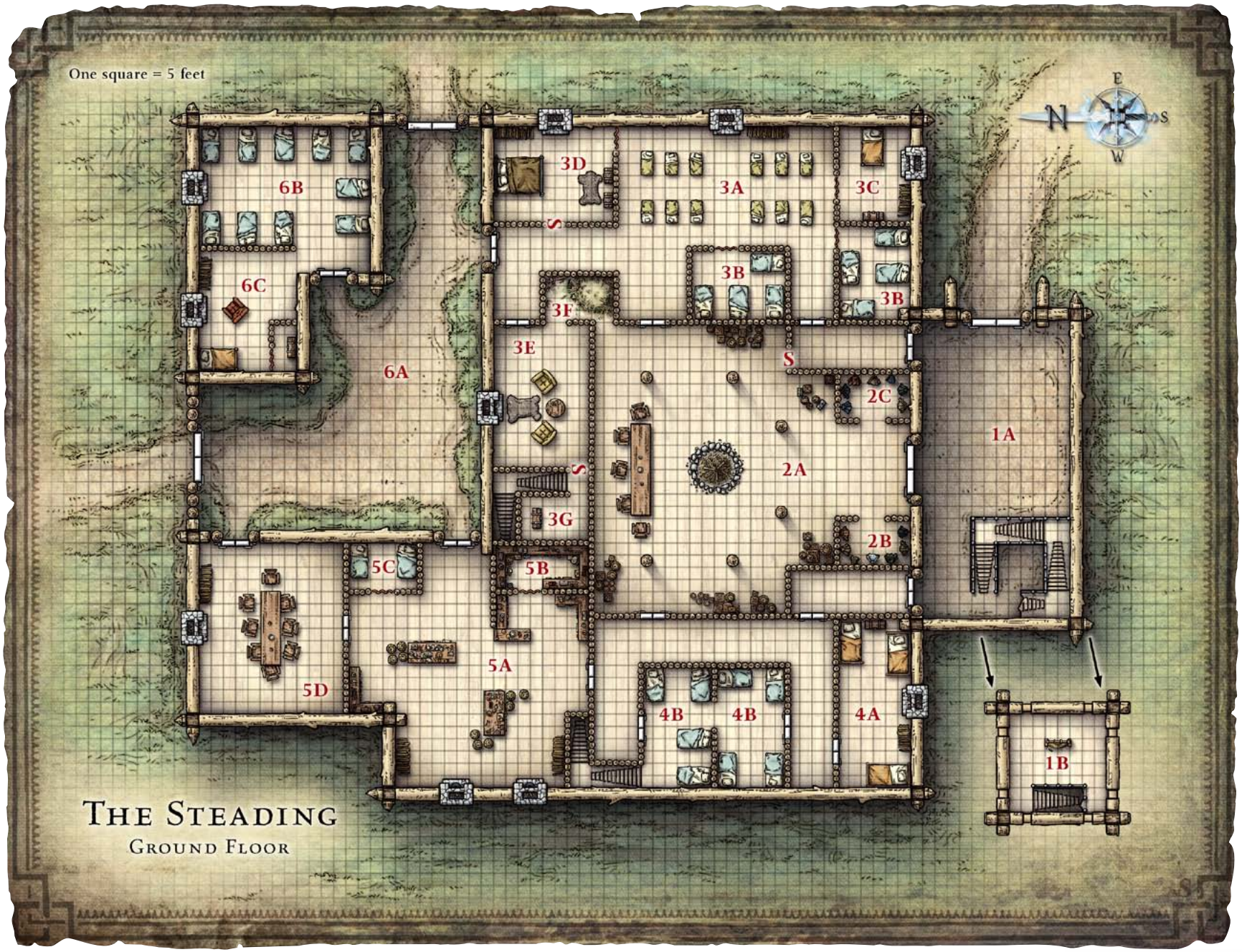
Light: Bright light (oil lanterns).

Monsters: 3 hill giants, 1 hill giant rockthrower, 4 ogre steading warriors.

If the characters enter the hall undetected, read:
You crack open the great doors of the steading and peer into a large hall illuminated by lanterns hanging from thick rafters. Stone flagstones cover the floor, and across from the entrance a giant-sized staircase climbs up to the watchtower. Hanging from pegs mounted high on the walls are ratty fur cloaks, capes made of stitched hide, and leather satchels. Three enormous sets of doors lead to deeper areas of the steading.

The characters hear sounds of the revelry occurring in area 2A.

If the characters enter the hall without alerting the giants in the watchtower, add:
Loud snores fill the room. Amid several empty casks and mugs, you see a slumbering hill giant and several sleeping ogres.


One square = 5 feet
N
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2A
3G
2B
5C
5B
5A
5D
4B
4B
4A
1B
THE STEADING
GROUND FLOOR

If the giants in the watchtower detect the characters and awaken the guards, add:
Bleary-eyed ogres stand ready, axes in hand. Behind them, a hill giant yawns as he pulls a large rock from a sack. Two more hill giants descend the tower staircase.

The sleeping giant and ogres have been drinking, and empty mugs and wine casks litter the area. Characters who enter the hall without being detected can sneak past the sleeping guards by succeeding on a group Stealth check opposed by the guards' passive Perception. Apply a +2 bonus to the heroes' check results because the guards are deep sleepers. If the guards awaken, their shouts of alarm alert the watchtower giants, who quickly descend the stairs to join the battle.

1A. Entry Hall: Various giant-sized cloaks, capes, and bags hang from many pegs along the walls. The bags contain assorted mundane items (see "Treasure," page 3). A giant-sized staircase with a wooden railing climbs up the watchtower. The stairs are difficult terrain to ascending characters and normal terrain to descending characters.

1B. Watchtower: The top floor of the watchtower is 30 feet above the floor of area 1A. Standing in the middle of the room is a bronze gong tied to a thick wooden frame. The two hill giants stationed here strike the gong if they see strangers approach the steading. Five-foot-wide gaps in the tower walls allow the guards to see in all four cardinal directions.

Tactics: The rockthrower hangs back and hurls rocks while the others rush up to smash enemies with their greatclubs. The ogres engage from flanking positions.

3 Hill Giants **Level 13 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 800 each
HP 159; **Bloodied** 79 **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +7
Speed 8

Standard Actions
⊕ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage.
⸸ **Sweeping Club** (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 2 (one or two creatures); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage, the giant pushes the target up to 2 squares and knocks it prone.
↷ **Hurl Rock** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.

Skills Athletics +16
Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment greatclub, 5 rocks

Hill Giant Rockthrower **Level 12 Artillery**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 700
HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22 **Perception** +9
Speed 8

Standard Actions
⊕ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage.
↷ **Knockdown Throw** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the rockthrower pushes the target 2 squares or knocks it prone.
✲ **Shattering Rockburst** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Skills Athletics +17
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 9 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+8)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, greatclub, 10 rocks

4 Ogre Steading Warriors **Level 11 Minion Soldier**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 150 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 **Perception** +5
Speed 8

Traits
Threatening Reach
The ogre can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares of it.

Standard Actions
⊕ **Battleaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 9 damage.

Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 11 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 4 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, battleaxe

Development

The other occupants of the steading do not hear sounds of combat in this area. Characters listening at the closed doors to area 2A hear the giants celebrating.

2. Hall of the Chief

Combat Encounter Level 16 (7,800 XP) and/or Skill Challenge Level 14 (2,000 XP)

Chief Nosnra spends most of his time in this vast hall, holding court. He is celebrating another successful raid with copious amounts of food and wine. Joining him is Laerthar, an emissary of the stone giant thane. The hall is filled with noisy giants, distracted by the revelry. The noise in the hall is such that its occupants do not hear sounds of battle elsewhere in the steading.

Light: Bright light (oil lanterns and fire pit).

Monsters: Nosnra, Ironjaws (dire bear), Learthar, 2 hill giant hunters, 3 hill giants.

When one or more characters can see 2A, read:
Great doors open into a vast, smoky hall. Six log pillars and a web of blackened rafters support the ceiling, which reaches its apex 30 feet above. A great fire pit dominates the hall. Roasting over the pit is an ox, two sheep, and four pigs impaled on spits. Behind the fire pit stands a long trestle table cluttered with haunches of meat, chunks of cheese, bread, and clay mugs. Around the table are five chairs, three against the back wall and one on each end. The middle chair is larger than the others and covered with furs. Empty barrels, crates, and chests litter the hall, their contents plundered from caravans and villages.

If the great hall is occupied, add:
The hall is filled with noise and rank odors. Hill giants laugh, shout, wrestle, and joke with one another. Presiding over the chaotic din is a monstrously fat hill giant, who appears half-asleep in his thronelike chair. At one end of the table, a stone giant picks at a plate of food. Under the table sleeps the biggest bear you've ever seen.

2A. The Great Hall: A character who searches can find the secret door in the southeast corner (Perception DC 20). A thorough search of the hall turns up two gold bracelets (500 gp each) and a silver comb set with small gems (100 gp). In addition, Ironjaws the dire bear wears a jeweled collar (1,500 gp).

Fire Pit: This pit is difficult terrain. Any creature that enters the fire pit or starts its turn there takes 10 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

2B. Armory: Thirty helmets, twenty-six heavy shields, twenty-two spears, nine greatclubs, three greataxes, and ten suits of hide armor are stored here in disarray. All of this gear is sized for Large humanoids.

2C. Cloak Room: Fur cloaks and leather bags hang from wooden pegs along the walls, and pairs of stitched-hide boots are strewn upon the floor. The apparel is sized for hill giants and ogres, and characters searching the bags find an assortment of mundane items (see "Treasure," page 3).

Tactics: Hanging on the wall behind Nosnra's throne is a great crossbow the size of a small ballista. He uses this weapon as a ranged weapon and a melee weapon, loading it with his minor action each round. However, if he hits while using it as a melee weapon more than a few times, the weapon breaks. Therefore, once he faces melee combatants, he pulls out his greatclub and uses it instead. Nosnra's failing is that he believes he is invincible in his stronghold, so he fights to the death.

Ironjaws is never far from the chief's side as the creature tries to defend its master.

Laerthar has no love for the chief, but he respects the alliance between Nosnra and Arnak, the stone giant thane. Consequently, he fights to the bitter end, using *petrifying ray* whenever possible and saving *rock storm* for when he can catch two or more enemies. When hemmed in by foes, Laerthar resorts to using his staff to push them back.

Hill giants try to push enemies into the fire pit.

Dire Bear **Level 11 Elite Brute**
Large natural beast XP 1,200

HP 276; **Bloodied** 138 **Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23 **Perception** +9
Speed 8
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Standard Actions

Claw ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage.

Maul ✦ At-Will
Effect: The bear uses *claw* twice. If both attacks hit the same target, the bear grabs the target (escape DC 19) if it has fewer than two creatures grabbed.

Ursine Crush ✦ At-Will
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the bear); the target takes 4d10 + 10 damage.

Str 23 (+11)	**Dex** 16 (+8)	**Wis** 18 (+9)
Con 18 (+9)	**Int** 2 (+1)	**Cha** 16 (+8)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Nosnra, Hill Giant Chief **Level 13 Elite Brute (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 1,600

HP 322; **Bloodied** 161 **Initiative** +8
AC 25, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24 **Perception** +7
Speed 8
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Great Crossbow Mastery
Nosnra can use the great crossbow to make melee weapon attacks as if the crossbow were a greatclub.

Threatening Reach
Nosnra can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares of him.

Standard Actions

Greatclub (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage, and Nosnra pushes the target up to 3 squares.

Great Crossbow (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8 + 8 damage, and the target falls prone.
Effect: Nosnra can use *greatclub*.

Sweeping Strike ✦ At-Will
Effect: Nosnra uses *greatclub* twice.

Triggered Actions

Brutal Leader ✦ At-Will
Trigger: Nosnra or an ally within 10 squares of him bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer.
Effect (Free Action): Close burst 10 (triggering creature in the burst); the target gains a +5 bonus to its next damage roll before the end of the encounter.

Skills Athletics +17, Intimidate +14

Str 22 (+12)	**Dex** 14 (+8)	**Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 21 (+11)	**Int** 9 (+5)	**Cha** 16 (+9)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment hide armor, greatclub, great crossbow, 20 bolts

Laerthar, Stone Giant Emissary **Level 14 Artillery**
Large elemental humanoid (earth, giant) XP 1,000

HP 113; **Bloodied** 56 **Initiative** +9
AC 28, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26 **Perception** +11
Speed 8 (earth walk) Low-light vision
Immune petrification

Standard Actions

Obsidian Staff (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the target falls prone.

Petrifying Ray ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6 + 11 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is petrified instead of immobilized (save ends).

Stone Burst (zone) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the target falls prone.
Effect: The burst creates a zone of difficult terrain that lasts until the end of the encounter. Creatures that have earth walk can ignore this difficult terrain.

Triggered Actions

Stone Bones ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: Laerthar is hit by an attack.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Laerthar gains resist 5 to all damage against the triggering attack.

Skills Arcana +12, Athletics +17, Diplomacy +13
Str 20 (+12) **Dex** 15 (+9) **Wis** 18 (+11)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 13 (+8)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Giant, Primordial
Equipment obsidian staff

Keys

Nosnra has a ring of keys to the locked chests in area 12C.

Laerthar has a key to the chest in area 4A.

2 Hill Giant Hunters **Level 13 Artillery**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 800 each

HP 103; **Bloodied** 51 **Initiative** +5
AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23 **Perception** +12
Speed 8

Standard Actions

Javelin (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 12 damage.

Javelin (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 12 damage.

Hurl Rock (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 20 damage, the giant can push the target 1 square, and the target falls prone.

Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment 6 javelins, 4 rocks

3 Hill Giants **Level 13 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 800 each

HP 159; **Bloodied** 79 **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +7
Speed 8

Standard Actions

Greatclub (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage.

Sweeping Club (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 2 (one or two creatures); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage, the giant pushes the target up to 2 squares and knocks it prone.

Hurl Rock (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.

Skills Athletics +16
Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment greatclub, 5 rocks

Skill Challenge: Negotiating with Nosnra

The hill giant chief is an ill-tempered brute who doesn't usually negotiate with non-giants. Characters who wish to converse with Nosnra need some kind of leverage; otherwise, he simply attacks them. Nosnra listens to the characters if they bloody him and kill all the other creatures in his hall, or if they capture his wife (found in area 3D). The negotiation should be roleplayed as a skill challenge.

Level: 14 (2,000 XP).

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Heal, Intimidate.

Bluff (DC 21, standard action; three successes maximum): The character dupes Nosnra into believing he should comply with the characters' wishes.

Diplomacy (DC 15, standard action; three successes maximum): The character appeals to the chief's vanity by making him feel superior.

Heal (DC 10, standard action; two successes maximum): The character allows Nosnra to regain 40 hit points or his wife to regain 30 hit points.

Intimidate (DC 29, standard action; three successes maximum): Suggesting the party's superiority in combat, the character bullies Nosnra into capitulation.

Secondary Skills: Insight, Nature.

Insight or Nature (DC 21, minor action): The character determines, either by watching Nosnra closely (Insight) or by relying on knowledge of hill giants (Nature), whether it is better to trick, flatter, or threaten Nosnra. This check cannot grant a success or failure on the skill challenge, but success provides a +2 bonus to the character's next Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check made during the same turn. Failure imposes a -2 penalty to such a check.

Success: Nosnra grants three requests minus the number of failures on the challenge.

If the characters ask for safe passage out of the steading, the chief makes sure that none of the steading's defenders attack them as they withdraw.

If the characters demand the release of Zandor Caskerhill (area 7E), Nosnra has the prisoner brought to them. If they demand the release of all dwarf slaves, Nosnra complies and has the dwarves rounded up. Liberating Zandor ot the dwarf slaves completes a minor quest (see "Quests," page 2).

If the characters ask for the locations of the frost giant and fire giant strongholds, Nosnra gives them the map from area 12C. Gaining this map fulfills a major quest (see "Quests," page 2). If the characters insist on accompanying the chief while he recovers the map, Nosnra and Feramaug, the iron dragon in area 12, attack them on their way out.

Failure: Nosnra attacks the characters and fights to the death.

Development

Gatherings here are raucous, so a full-scale battle here isn't likely to attract much attention. On the fifth round of combat, an orc slave from the kitchen enters the hall through the western doors and promptly leaves. If it escapes, it takes refuge in the kitchen but doesn't alert the giants or ogres there.

3. Giant Lodgings

Combat Encounter Level 15 (6,000 XP)

This wing of the steading houses most of the hill giants, and it also contains quarters for the chief and his wife.

Morzul (the chief's wife) and the other adult hill giants are asleep in their bedrooms. However, the young hill giants in area 3A are awake and active, playing games and roughhousing. Although immature, these young hill giants stand 7 feet tall and are more than a physical match for the average human. They emulate the adults by attacking any intruders they see.

Light: Bright light (oil lanterns and fireplaces).

Monsters: Morzul (hill giant earth shaman), 3 hill giants, 1 hill giant avalancher, 12 young hill giants.

When the adventurers approach area 3A, read:
You hear many giantish voices laughing and shouting. A large open area contains many beds and more than a dozen young hill giants, each one a mere 7 feet tall. They play crude games and wrestle on the floor. A fire blazes in the hearth, and the walls are adorned with trophies: animal skins and furs, racks of antlers, and mounted heads of beasts and humanoids, including some humans and dwarves. A number of large doors lead to other areas of the stronghold.

3A. Giant Den: This room contains twelve beds sized for young hill giants. The walls are festooned with hunting trophies, including heads and skulls (human, dwarf, animal, and monster), skins, furs, and nonmagical arms and armor.

3B. Hill Giant Quarters: Four beds sized for hill giant adults fill this room. Animal furs cover the beds.

3C. Subchief's Bedroom: Nosnra sent his subchief, Sly Gulla, to receive orders from King Snurre. The subschief took most of his valuables with him, leaving behind a great bed covered with furs and a locked wooden chest (Thievery DC 20 to open) holding 2,000 gp in valuables and coinage.

3D. Chief's Bedroom: This room is hung with rugs and skins. Against the north wall stands an enormous bed sized for Chief Nosnra and his wife, Morzul. It also contains a bearskin rug and a pair of locked wooden chests (Morzul has the keys to both). One holds a gem-studded helm (2,500 gp), an ivory drinking horn with platinum filigree (2,500 gp), and 1,000 gp. The other contains a shield of warding (or another level 14 magic item) used as a tray, three pieces of jewelry (500 gp each), and 1,000 gp. Each chest can be unlocked with a DC 20 Thievery check.

In addition to the chests, Morzul wears a gold amulet set with jewels (1,500 gp) that was a gift from her husband.

A character who searches can find the secret door in the western wall (Perception DC 20). This door is otherwise treated as a normal heavy door (see "Upper Level Features" above).

3E. Chief's Den: The chief reserves this room for private meetings and meals. Two padded chairs, each one covered with stitched human skin, face the fireplace, above which is mounted the head of a great white stag. Between the chairs stands a round table with a pair of bronze flagons atop it. A bearskin rug covers the floor in front of the fireplace. A secret door in the western wall can be found with an active DC 20 Perception check; it is otherwise treated as a normal heavy door.

3F. Ironjaws's Den: The chief's pet dire bear sleeps here on occasion. A mound of straw serves as its bed.

3G. Secret Staircase and Letter: Stone steps lead down to the chief's treasury (area 12). In the niche past the stairs is a large, unlocked wooden trunk containing twenty-one scroll tubes made from hollowed bones. One scroll tube contains a letter to Nosnra, written in Giant, from someone named Obmi (see below). The other twenty tubes are empty.

Chief Nosnra,

His Majesty King Snurre commends your relentless attacks on merchant caravans and farms, as well as your brutal assault on the borderlands keep, but now he demands your finest warriors for a bold new raid against the humans. He wants to see their towns burn! Have your best troops rally at Howling Crag by the next full moon, and one-quarter of the victory spoils will be yours.

Your subchief sends his regards, along with your portion of the reward from the last raid.

Obmi

Tactics: The adult giants are accustomed to the young giants making lots of noise, and they tend to ignore it. However, if combat erupts in area 3A, one of the adult giants (determined randomly) awakens and investigates. If it sees that the young giants are being attacked, it shouts an alarm, awakening all of the other adult giants in this area of the steading.

Morzul orders her fellow giants to attack enemies that fall prey to her *earthen chains* and *earth wave*. If Morzul is bloodied, she tries to flee to the chief's hall (area 2A) to warn her husband that intruders have entered the steading (see "Development" below). If she believes her husband is dead, she flees to Varrg (area 6) instead.

The other adults wade into combat to draw attention away from the young giants. The young giants are eager to fight creatures smaller than they are, and so they elect not to run but instead use *shove* and *club* against the interlopers.

3 Hill Giants **Level 13 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 800 each

HP 159; **Bloodied** 79 **Initiative** +5
AC 25, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 25 **Perception** +7
Speed 8

Standard Actions

⊕ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage.

⸸ **Sweeping Club** (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 2 (one or two creatures); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage, the giant pushes the target up to 2 squares and knocks it prone.

↷ **Hurl Rock** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.

Skills Athletics +16
Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment greatclub, 5 rocks

Morzul, Hill Giant Earth Shaman **Level 13 Controller (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 800

HP 131; **Bloodied** 65 **Initiative** +8
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23 **Perception** +7
Speed 8

Standard Actions

⊕ **Earthgrip Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage, and the target is restrained until the end of the giant's next turn.

↷ **Earthen Chains** (healing) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends). If the target is flying, it falls. The first time one of the giant's allies hits the target while it is stunned by this power, that ally regains 15 hit points.

✧ **Earth Wave** ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage, and the giant pushes the target up to 2 squares.
Effect: The target falls prone. Each ally in the blast can use a free action to shift up to 3 squares and make a basic attack.

Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 10 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant

12 Young Hill Giants **Level 11 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 150 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 7

Standard Actions

⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage, or 14 damage if the target is prone.

Minor Actions

⸸ **Shove** ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature); the giant can push the target 1 square.

Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 6 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+4)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment club

Hill Giant Avalancher **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 1,000

HP 139; Bloodied 69 **Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 27, Will 24 **Perception** +10
Speed 8

Standard Actions

⊕ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage.

↷ **Rolling Rock** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 8 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, and the avalancher slides the target 4 squares and knocks it prone.

⸸ **Crushing Charge** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: The avalancher charges and makes the following attack in place of a melee basic attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the target falls prone.

Move Actions

Stomping Shift ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The avalancher shifts 4 squares and can move through prone enemies' spaces. Each time the avalancher enters a prone enemy's space for the first time during the shift, that enemy takes 8 damage.

Skills Athletics +17
Str 21 (+12) **Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 15 (+9) **Cha** 11 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, greatclub

Development

If Morzul succeeds in warning her husband of intruders in the steading, the characters might be in serious trouble as Nosnra goes on the offensive and searches the steading for interlopers. Otherwise, combat here draws no reinforcements from other areas.

Characters searching area 3G might find the letter addressed to Chief Nosnra from someone named "Obmi" (see the preceding page). One of the locations referred to in the letter is Howling Crag; a successful DC 20 History check reveals that this is the name of a remote stronghold ruled by Thane Arnak, lord of the stone giants (see "Warrens of the Stone Giant Thane," *Dungeon* 198).

4. Guest Quarters

Combat Encounter Level 10 (2,900 XP)

Honored guests of the chief reside here during their visit to the steading. At present, this area provides quarters for Laerthar, the stone giant emissary, his two bodyguards, and a handful of ogres assigned to watch over them.

Characters can move through the area without drawing attention to themselves by sticking to the hallways and staying out of the various rooms. If they loiter in the hallways, the characters might be seen by orc slaves moving between the great hall (area 2A) and the kitchen (area 5A).

Perception DC 13: Characters who listen at the door to area 4A and succeed on the check hear the two giants talking about a recent raid and laughing at the stupidity of the hill giants and ogres. The ogres have been drinking copious amounts of ale and are sleeping. Characters listening at the doors to the ogres' dens hear snoring with a successful check. (Sneaking past the sleeping ogres without waking them requires a DC 14 group Stealth check.)

Light: Bright light (oil lanterns and fireplace).

Monsters: 2 stone giants, 6 ogre steading warriors.

The following description of area 4A assumes that the stone giants haven't been alerted to intruders:

The walls of this spacious room are adorned with racks of antlers, cured animal furs and skins, and the heads of various beasts, monsters, dwarves, elves, and humans. Three long, giant-sized beds heaped with furs are pushed into the corners of the room, and sitting on two of them are a pair of chortling stone giants. A large wooden chest is pushed against the east wall between them. A blazing fire crackles in the hearth across from the door.

A thick rope hangs from the ceiling by the door, but it is not immediately obvious (DC 14 Perception check to spot). The rope connects to a bell in area 4B. If the rope is pulled, the bell rings, and a weary ogre guard answers the summons 2 rounds later.

4A. Stone Giants' Quarters: Mounted on the walls of this room are various trophies (heads, antlers, and skins) intended to make the occupants feel at home. Furnishings include three giant-sized beds heaped with furs and a locked wooden chest. Laerthar (area 2A) has the key to the chest, which can also be unlocked with a DC 20 Thievery check.

The chest contains ten 500 gp gems, 700 gp, and a stone tablet engraved in Dwarven. It contains a message is written to Laerthar from Belastraya, sister of the stone giant thane. It translates as follows.

Laerthar, my love,

Go to the hill giants. Help Nosnra plan his raids. Make sure he does not lose sight of our greater goal. Do this for your thane. Do this for me.

Belastraya

4B. Guards' Quarters: Each room contains four nasty, flea-ridden beds covered with dank furs, plus an assortment of worthless trinkets (see "Treasure," page 3).

A staircase in the northwest corner descends to area 7. Torches placed in wall sconces illuminate this uneven, mold-encrusted staircase. The stairs are scaled for Medium characters; treat them as difficult terrain while ascending or normal terrain while descending.

Tactics: The stone giants arise and attack any intruders who enter their room, and they also respond to shouts of alarm from the nearby ogres. The same is true of the ogres, who react quickly to the shouting of the stone giants.

The stone giants mark enemies and use *stone bones* to reduce the damage from incoming attacks. They use *staggering sweep* against two or more enemies in range and *hardened threat* as opportunity allows. Both they and the ogres fight to the death.

2 Stone Giants	**Level 14 Soldier**
Large elemental humanoid (earth, giant)	XP 1,000 each
HP 140; **Bloodied** 70	**Initiative** +12
AC 30, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26	**Perception** +12
Speed 8 (earth walk)	Low-light vision
Immune petrification	
Standard Actions	
Stone Greatclub (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the giant marks the target until the end of the giant's next turn.	
Hurl Rock (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 13 damage.	
Staggering Sweep (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Attack: Close blast 2 (creatures in the blast); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, the giant pushes the target up to 2 squares, and the giant marks the target until the end of the giant's next turn.	
Effect: The giant shifts 2 squares but must remain within 2 squares of any creatures marked by it.	
Triggered Actions	
Hardened Threat ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: A creature marked by the giant and within its reach willingly moves.	
Effect (Opportunity Action): The giant uses *stone greatclub* against the triggering creature.	
Stone Bones ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: The giant is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The giant gains resist 5 to all damage against the triggering attack.	
Skills Athletics +18, Stealth +15	
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 20 (+12)	
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 11 (+7)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Giant	
Equipment greatclub, 3 rocks	

6 Ogre Steading Warriors	Level 11 Minion Soldier
Large natural humanoid (giant)	XP 150 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +7
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22	**Perception** +5
Speed 8	
Traits	
Threatening Reach	
The ogre can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares of it.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Battleaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. AC	
Hit: 9 damage.	
Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 11 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+5)	
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 4 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant	
Equipment hide armor, battleaxe	

Development

No reinforcements come to the aid of the giants or the ogres. However, if the characters loiter in the hallways, they might catch an orc slave from the kitchen (area 5A) moving through the area on an errand. The slave flees back to the kitchen if it spots intruders and alerts the ogre taskmasters, who don't take the slave seriously and opt to ignore the threat.

5. Kitchen and Dining Hall

Combat Encounter Level 13 (4,900 XP)

This wing of the steading is alive with frantic activity, as cooks and slaves busy themselves preparing the next meal for Chief Nosnra, his guests, and the steading's other inhabitants.

Light: Bright light (oil lanterns and fireplaces).

Monsters: 2 hill giant cooks, 3 ogre taskmasters, 15 orc kitchen slaves.

If the characters peer into area 5A, read:

Smoke fills this odorous kitchen, which features two large trestle tables covered with pots, kettles and bowls. Counters along the walls are likewise cluttered with wooden utensils, jugs, mugs, and plates. Barrels are piled near the tables, and various cheeses, smoked meats, and sausages hang from the blackened rafters. Simmering in the hearths are two fat iron cauldrons overflowing with hot broth. In front of the hearths stand a pair of hill giants wearing stained leather aprons, screaming instructions at a host of orc slaves and their ogre taskmasters.

If the characters peer into area 5D, read:

This dining hall contains a massive oak table surrounded by eight giant-sized chairs. The chairs at the end of the table are draped with furs and look more impressive than the others. Mugs, plates, and candelabra litter the tabletop. Animal furs, racks of antlers, and mounted heads adorn the walls. A copper dragon's head is mounted above the fireplace.

Nosnra might be chief of the hill giants, but the cooks know who holds the real power in the steading, and they're not afraid to throw their weight (and their pots) around. The giant cooks oversee the preparation of food but actually do very little work. The ogre taskmasters do a lot more to keep the orc slaves busy. The slaves hurry about frantically, leaving the kitchen singly or in pairs to deliver food and drink to the great hall (area 2A) or to tidy up the dining hall (area 5D).

5A. Kitchen: The hill giant cooks keep stacks of barrels near their oversized worktables. These stacks provide cover. The barrels, which were stolen from nearby villages and merchant caravans, contain water, wine, flour, honey, oil, and salt. Each barrel is 3 feet tall, 2 feet wide, and 200 pounds.

The kitchen counters are 7 feet high and provide cover. It costs 1 extra square of movement to move on top of a counter.

5B. Larder: A thick curtain covers the doorway of this area, which is empty except for a dozen animal carcasses hanging from hooked chains slung over the rafters.

5C. Bedroom: Two giant beds covered with furs fill this room. Ogre taskmasters sleep here when not on duty.

5D. Dining Hall: Chief Nosnra and his wife have guests for dinner in this room. When they dine here, Nosnra and Morzul sit at opposite ends of the table. Orc slaves move between this hall and the kitchen frequently.

Tactics: The hill giant cooks grab nearby cooking supplies to use *hurl pot* and *hurl barrel* while barking

2 Hill Giant Cooks	Level 13 Artillery
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant)	XP 800 each
HP 102; **Bloodied** 51	**Initiative** +8
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23	**Perception** +7
Speed 8	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Tenderizer** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.	
Hurl Pot (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage.	
Hurl Barrel (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage, and the target is covered in whatever substance the barrel contains (roll a d6):	
⚀ ⚁ *Water, Ale, Vinegar, or Wine:* No effect	
⚂ ⚃ *Honey:* The target is slowed (save ends).	
⚄ *Flour:* The target is blinded (save ends).	
⚅ *Oil:* The target falls prone and cannot stand (save ends). For the rest of the encounter, if the target takes fire damage, it also takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Scalding Cauldron ✦ **Encounter**	
Requirement: The giant must be adjacent to a fireplace or hearth.	
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +16 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d10 + 10 fire damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the giant's next turn.	
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+7)	
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant	
Equipment leather apron (leather armor), tenderizer (club), 5 pots, 3 barrels	

orders to the ogres. If enemies get too close, the cooks grab the cauldrons from the hearths and splash their enemies with *scalding cauldron*. They move away to continue their throwing, resorting to wielding their wooden tenderizers when forced into melee. If they run out of pots or barrels, they can move to tables or counters to grab more ammunition.

The taskmasters use their spiked chains to restrain enemies and keep them away from the hill giant cooks, while using *bully* to slide their orc minions around the kitchen.

The orc slaves gang up on soft targets, brutally attacking with stone knives. If all the ogre taskmasters are killed, the remaining orc slaves flee. (They scatter in all directions and generally stay out of the party's way.)

3 Ogre Taskmasters **Level 11 Soldier**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 600 each

HP 117; **Bloodied** 58 **Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22 **Perception** +6
Speed 8

Traits

Threatening Reach
The ogre can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 3 squares of it.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Spiked Chain** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.

⸸ **Entangling Chain** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target is restrained and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). While the target is restrained, the ogre cannot use *entangling chain* or *threatening reach*, and the ogre's melee range decreases to 1 square.

Minor Actions

Bully ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: The ogre slides an ally up to 3 squares.

Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 6 (+3) **Cha** 6 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, spiked chain

15 Orc Kitchen Slaves **Level 9 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 100 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +4
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Stone Knife** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage plus 1 extra damage for each ally adjacent to the orc and to the target.

Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment stone knife

Development

Combat in this area does not attract reinforcements from other parts of the steading, since other denizens find the cooks unbearably surly and domineering.

6. Courtyard and Barracks

Combat Encounter Level 15 (6,100 XP)

This courtyard serves as a rallying point for the steading's hill giants, who gather here briefly before heading out on raids. It also serves as a pen for their dire wolves. The adjoining barracks contains beds for hill giant hunters, raiders, and scouts.

The dire wolves are lying about in the open courtyard, but they are light sleepers. The hill giants are between raids and resting in the barracks.

Light: Bright light (daylight, oil lanterns, and fireplaces) or darkness (courtyard at night).

Monsters: Varrg, 5 trained dire wolves, 2 hill giant avalanchers.

When the characters enter or peer into the courtyard (area 6A), read:

Between the main building and a more modest giant-sized dwelling is a muddy courtyard closed off by two 15-foot wooden palisade walls set with heavy wooden doors.

6A. Courtyard: The dire wolves have free run of the courtyard but spend much of their idle time sleeping on the patches of grass that run alongside the buildings.

The courtyard has two "gates" that are actually sets of 15-foot-tall double doors made of lashed wooden logs. They are barred from the inside. The wooden bar that seals each set of doors can be slid away with a DC 20 Athletics check (a standard action). The wolves cannot slide the bars.

6B. Barracks: Ten giant-sized beds line the walls of this room. The ceiling slopes upward to a peak of 20 feet and is crossed with wooden rafters. The hill giants who occupy the room hang their cloaks and satchels on wooden hooks driven into the walls. Characters searching the room find assorted mundane items (see "Treasure," page 3).

6C. Varrg's Quarters: Varrg, the hill giant werewolf, lives here. Nosnra relies on Varrg to train the dire wolves, but the two hill giants rarely see eye to eye. To his credit, Varrg keeps mainly to himself but is responsible for planning most of the raids. His room contains a fur-draped chair, a fur-covered bed, and a curtained alcove hiding a locked wooden chest (DC 20 Thievery check to open). The chest contains a +3 *holy symbol of battle* (or another level 15 uncommon magic item), five 500 gp gems, a gold statuette of a centaur (1,500 gp), 3,500 gp in loose coins, and two *potions of vitality*.

Tactics: Varrg is a legend among hill giants, feared even more than Chief Nosnra. However, he relishes the hunt and disdains a leadership role. His regeneration makes him fearless. Early in the battle, he uses *savage howl* to benefit his allies. Varrg changes form as needed to remain mobile with *speed of the wolf*.

The dire wolves are smart enough to flank enemies and gang up to gain combat advantage.

The hill giant avalanchers are loyal to Varrg and try to stay mobile so they can stomp prone targets into paste with *stomping shift*.

Varrg, Hill Giant Werewolf **Level 13 Elite Brute (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant, shapechanger) XP 1,600

HP 320; **Bloodied** 160 **Initiative** +10
AC 25, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24 **Perception** +13
Speed 8 (10 in wolf form) Low-light vision
Immune greater moon frenzy
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Blood Moon ✦ Aura 5
Varrg and any ally in the aura gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied targets.

Regeneration
Varrg regains 10 hit points whenever he starts his turn and has at least 1 hit point. If Varrg takes damage from a silvered weapon, his regeneration does not function on his next turn.

Standard Actions

Greatclub (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: Varrg must be in giant or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage.

Bite (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: Varrg must be in dire wolf or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 13 damage. At the end of the encounter, the target must make a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts greater moon frenzy (stage 1).

Speed of the Wolf ✦ At Will
Requirement: Varrg must be in dire wolf or hybrid form.
Effect: Varrg uses *bite*, shifts up to 6 squares, and uses *bite* again.

Sweeping Strike ✦ At-Will
Requirement: Varrg must be in giant or hybrid form.
Effect: Varrg uses *greatclub* twice.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Varrg alters his physical form to appear as a dire wolf, a hill giant, or a humanoid hybrid of the two. The new form persists until Varrg uses *change shape* again or until he drops to 0 hit points.

Savage Howl ✦ Encounter
Effect: Close burst 5 (allies in the burst); each target gains 15 temporary hit points, and each target that has a *bite* attack can make a *bite* attack as a free action.

Skills Athletics +18, Endurance +16, Intimidate +12
Str 24 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment greatclub

Greater Moon Frenzy **Level 13 Disease**
This disease starts with a fever, which soon becomes and violent and unpredictable rage.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target takes a -2 penalty to Will.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, whenever the target becomes bloodied, it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an ally adjacent to it.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 3, whenever the target is hit by an attack, it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an ally adjacent to it.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.
13 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.
14–19: No change.
20 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

5 Trained Dire Wolves **Level 10 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast XP 500 each

HP 108; **Bloodied** 54 **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +12
Speed 10 Low-light vision

Traits

Combat Advantage
The wolf has combat advantage against a target that has two or more of the wolf's allies adjacent to it.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 7 damage, or 3d10 + 7 against a prone target. The target falls prone if the wolf has combat advantage against it.

Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 5 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+5)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

2 Hill Giant Avalanchers **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 1,000

HP 139; **Bloodied** 69 **Initiative** +15
AC 28, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 24 **Perception** +10
Speed 8

Standard Actions

Greatclub (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage.

Rolling Rock (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 8 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, and the avalancher slides the target 4 squares and knocks it prone.

Crushing Charge (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅ ⚄ ⚃
Effect: The avalancher charges and makes the following attack in place of a melee basic attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the target falls prone.

Move Actions

Stomping Shift ✦ At-Will
Effect: The avalancher shifts 4 squares and can move through prone enemies' spaces. Each time the avalancher enters a prone enemy's space for the first time during the shift, that enemy takes 8 damage.

Skills Athletics +17
Str 21 (+12) **Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 15 (+9) **Cha** 11 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, greatclub

Keys

Varrg has the key to chest in area 6C worn on a rope around his neck.

Dungeon Level Features (Areas 7–12)

The masonry work down here is quite good, certainly superior to orc or giant work. Characters note that most of the stonework is old, patched in places with new mortar or shored up with newly hewn stone.

Ceilings: All passageways are arched, with the peak of the arch about 17 feet overhead. Larger rooms have 30-foot ceilings, while smaller areas have 20-foot ceilings. The rough-hewn caverns to the east have uneven ceilings ranging in height from 15 to 30 feet.

Doors: Unlike the doors of the steading above, the doors of the Dungeon Level were not designed specifically with hill giants in mind, although some of them are quite large. Doors that span 10-foot openings are 10 feet tall and made of iron-reinforced darkwood, fitted with iron hinges. An adult hill giant must duck to pass through such a door. Doors that span 20-foot-wide openings are 15 feet tall and made of smooth black stone with heavy iron hinges.

Noise: The smithy (area 8A) is very noisy, as is the torture chamber (8B). The characters can hear the sounds of hammering and metalworking, as well as screams. These noises can mask the sounds of combat in other areas on this level.

Rocky Debris: Throughout the dungeon are piles of rocky debris—the result of old collapses or recent excavations. Rocky debris is difficult terrain.

Torches: In sconces along the walls, torches light all rooms and passageways unless noted otherwise.

Wide Tunnels: The wide passageways that connect areas 7A, 8A, and 10A have stone buttresses every 20 feet.

7. Dungeon

Combat Encounter Level 13 (4,750 XP)

Prisoners the hill giants have captured are brought here, where the prisoners are incarcerated or put to work. A hill giant named the Keeper maintains order with the help of bugbear minions.

The Keeper, his pet apes, the bulk of the bugbear jailers, and all the prisoners are usually found in their separate rooms and cells. If you're using miniatures, place the minis for these creatures on the map only when the characters see them.

Light: Bright light (torches), darkness in the prison cells.

Monsters: The Keeper, 2 carnivorous apes, 1 bugbear jailer captain, 10 bugbear jailers.

Other Creatures: Zandor Caskerhill, 10 human prisoners.

When the characters see area 7A, read:

Smoky, sputtering torches illuminate a spacious square room. Four thick pillars support the 30-foot-high ceiling. Benches and tables have been pushed against the walls, leaving most of the area clear. Brass gongs hang from wooden frames in the southwest and southeast corners, and a bugbear stands in front of each of them. Ironbound wooden doors and gaping hallways lead to other areas of the dungeon, and from somewhere in the darkness, you hear plaintive sobbing.

The two bugbear jailers strike the gongs (a standard action) if they see intruders or escaped prisoners. One round after the gongs sound, the remaining bugbear jailers spill into the room from area 7C. The Keeper, the carnivorous apes, and the bugbear captain appear the following round.

If the characters remain unseen or take out the guards before they sound the gongs, they can deal with the dungeon's defenders in smaller groups.

7A. Marshaling Area: This room is primarily used as a place where slaves are rounded up and sent about their tasks under guard. It is also used for the revels of the off-duty dungeon crew. A few smoky torches burn along the walls. Benches and tables are pushed out of the way, revealing a black stone floor worn by the tread of countless feet. Standing in the southwest and southeast corners are two brass gongs hanging on wooden frames. The bugbear jailers strike these gongs to sound the alarm.

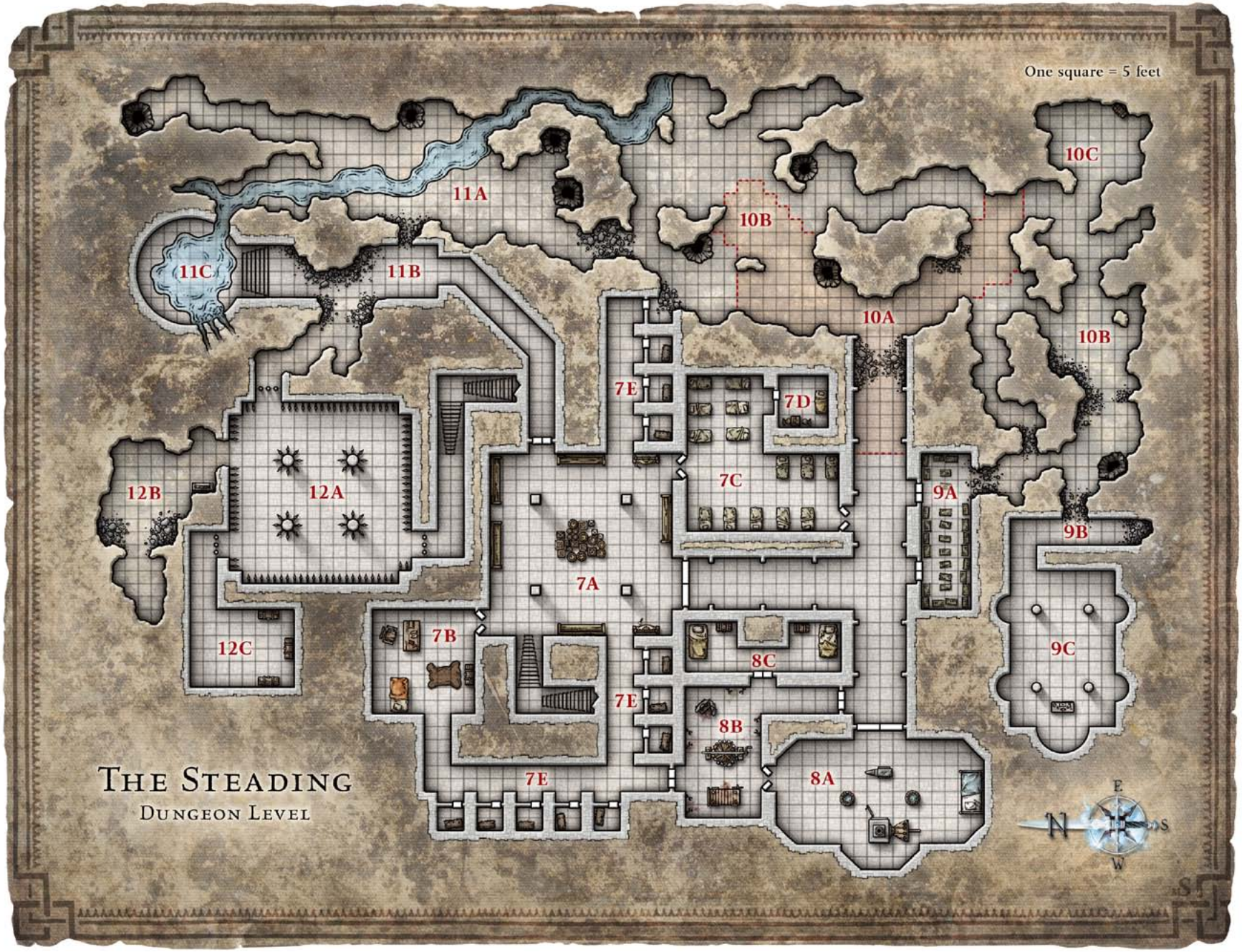
7B. The Keeper's Chamber: The Keeper is a ghastly hill giant—hunchbacked, twisted, and with one good eye. Wicked and remorseless, he is never seen without his two pet carnivorous apes. His room contains a giant-sized bed covered with furs, a table, a chair, two crates of torches, a bearskin rug, and a locked wooden chest. Stone shelves mounted above the entrances of this room serve as perches for the carnivorous apes.

The Keeper has a large, locked wooden chest (DC 20 Thievery check to open) in his quarters. It contains an assortment of worthless items (see "Treasure," page 3), nonmagical gear taken from various slaves and prisoners, and a +4 *amulet of protection* (or another level 16 uncommon magic item). The Keeper also wields a +3 *thundering battleaxe*.

7C. Bugbear Barracks: Fourteen human-sized beds fill this room, and several bugbear jailers sleep here at any given time. Flea-ridden animal skins cover each bed.

7D. Bugbear Captain's Room: This room contains a single human-sized bed for the bugbear captain who serves as the Keeper's second-in-command. A table and two chairs are pushed against the west wall. The table has a spilled mug of ale on it.

7E. Cellblocks: Each cell is a 10-foot-square cubicle bereft of furnishings except for rusty chains and shackles affixed to the walls. A sturdy, windowless, locked iron door seals each cell (DC 20 Thievery check to unlock, or DC 29 Athletics check to break;


One square = 5 feet
11A
11C
11B
10C
10B
10A
10B
7E
7D
7C
12B
12A
9A
9B
7A
12C
7B
8C
9C
7E
8B
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8A
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THE STEADING
DUNGEON LEVEL

unlocking the cell is impossible from inside). The Keeper and his bugbear captain hold the keys.

The last cell in the eastern cellblock leads into a network of caverns (area 10B).

All prisoners wear shackles on their ankles. While shackled, a prisoner is slowed. Shackles can be unlocked (Thievery DC 20), or they can be broken (Athletics DC 29). If the characters successfully free one or more prisoners, see "The Prisoners," below.

Tactics: The first time he attacks with his +3 *thundering battleaxe*, the Keeper uses *reign of thunder*. He uses *outta my way* to move enemies into squares where they grant combat advantage to his carnivorous apes, or to clear a path for himself. Meanwhile, the hungry carnivorous apes vie for flanking positions.

The bugbear captain uses *intimidating sneer* against the first enemy within range, then charges that enemy. On subsequent rounds, the captain continues using *intimidating sneer* to draw attacks. The bugbears rally around their captain, flanking enemies for the benefit of the captain's *predatory command* aura.

2 Carnivorous Apes **Level 11 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast XP 600

HP 111; **Bloodied** 55 **Initiative** +11
AC 25, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +12
Speed 8, climb 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Swift Climber
The ape does not provoke opportunity attacks by climbing.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage, or 3d8 + 9 if the ape has combat advantage against the target.

Agile Attack ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: The ape shifts or climbs half its speed. It can enter enemies' spaces during the movement. It then uses *bite*.

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +15
Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 6 (+3) **Cha** 5 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

The Keeper, Hill Giant Jailer **Level 13 Elite Skirmisher**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) XP 1,600

HP 262; **Bloodied** 131 **Initiative** +9
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24 **Perception** +6
Speed 8
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Standard Actions

Battleaxe (thunder, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the Keeper pushes the target up to 2 squares. If the Keeper scores a critical hit, he deals 3d6 extra thunder damage.

Sweeping Strike ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The Keeper uses *battleaxe* twice.

Reign of Thunder (thunder, weapon) ✦ **Daily**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage plus 2d8 thunder damage, and the Keeper pushes the target up to 2 squares. If the Keeper scores a critical hit, he deals 3d6 extra thunder damage.

Move Actions

Push Through ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: The Keeper shifts up to his speed and can enter enemies' spaces during the shift. Each time the Keeper enters an enemy's space for the first time during the shift, he makes the following attack against that enemy.
Attack: Melee 0 (one creature); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, the Keeper pushes the enemy up to 2 squares, and the enemy falls prone.

Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment chainmail, +3 *thundering battleaxe*

Keys

The Keeper has a, ring of keys. One key unlocks the chest in area 7B, and the others unlock the cells and prisoners' shackles.

On the bugbear jailer captain's belt is a similar ring of keys that lacks a key for the chest in area 7B.

Bugbear Jailer Captain **Level 12 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 700

HP 122; **Bloodied** 61 **Initiative** +11
AC 28, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 **Perception** +13
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Predatory Command ✦ **Aura** 1
When an enemy in the aura is hit by an attack while granting the attacker combat advantage, the enemy takes 5 extra damage from the attack.

Standard Actions

Morningstar (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 + 7 damage.

Minor Actions

Intimidating Sneer (charm) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Close burst 5 (one creature in the burst); +15 vs. Will.
Hit: The target grants combat advantage until it hits the bugbear with an attack (save ends).

Skills Intimidate +12, Stealth +14
Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant, Goblin
Equipment chainmail, morningstar

10 Bugbear Jailers **Level 10 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20 **Perception** +7
Speed 6

Standard Actions

Morningstar (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 11 damage, or 13 if the bugbear has combat advantage against the target.

Skills Intimidate +10, Stealth +13
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant, Goblin
Equipment leather armor, morningstar

Prisoners

Ten of the prisoners are humans abducted from farms, villages, and merchant caravans. They have nothing to offer their rescuers except their gratitude, and they look to the characters to help them escape the steading alive. These prisoners know the layout of the nearby areas, but not areas 10–12, which they have never seen. They can also warn characters about the dungeon's monstrous denizens, including the Keeper, the hill giant torturers, and the fire giant smith. If the characters inquire about dwarf slaves, the human prisoners tell them that the giants have put several dwarf slaves to work in the smithy (area 8A) and the mines (area 10). If the characters ask them about an abandoned temple rumored to lie in the dungeon, the prisoners can point them in the right direction (to area 9C) but refuse to go there, claiming that the temple is "an evil place."

Rescuing Zandor Caskerhill is the goal of a minor quest (see "Quests," page 2). Zandor's once noble demeanor has been shattered, reducing him to a gibbering fool afraid of his own shadow. He fears that, if he leaves his cell, the giants will eat him. It takes a DC 15 Diplomacy check or Intimidate check to coax the merchant out of the cell, and even then, he clings to the character who "frees" him, refusing to let go for fear of being left behind. When confronted by monsters of any kind, he screams like a maniac and tries to run in the opposite direction. In short, getting Zandor out of the dungeon and the steading alive is a real chore unless the characters resort to knocking him unconscious and dragging him along (a tactic that does nothing to improve his demeanor). If Zandor is safely returned to civilization, it takes months for him to regain his senses, and the ordeal leaves him angry and embarrassed. If he feels that the characters mistreated him, he stays away from them. If the characters helped him without resorting to violence, Zandor uses his noble connections to help them any way he can.

Zandor Caskerhill **Level 5 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP –

HP 59; **Bloodied** 29 **Initiative** +2
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 (2 while shackled)

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shackle Chains** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and Zandor can slide the target 1 square.

✣ **Survival Tactics** ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Close burst 1 (one ally in the burst); the target can shift 1 square. If the target shifts into a square adjacent to Zandor, it can make a basic attack as a free action.

Skills Bluff +9, Insight +8, Streetwise +9
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 11 (+2) **Int** 13 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment iron shackles

10 Human Prisoners **Level 5 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP –

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +4
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 (2 while shackled)

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shackle Chains** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage.
Effect: The human shifts 1 square after the attack.

Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 11 (+2) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment iron shackles

8. Smithy and Torture Chamber

Combat Encounter Level 12-13 (3,875-4,475 XP)

A fire giant smith named Smolderheart forges armor and weapons for the hill giants and their ogre allies. He relies on dwarf slaves to help with menial labor and uses orc slaves to watch over the dwarf slaves. If any of the slaves get out of line, two hill giant torturers lurk nearby to set them straight.

This part of the dungeon is particularly noisy. Sounds of metal striking metal issue from the smithy (area 8A), but the noise is muffled by horrid screams emanating from the torture chamber (area 8B).

Light: Bright light (torches).

Monsters: Smolderheart, 2 hill giant torturers, 5 orc ruffians, and (possibly) 1 fire elemental.

Other Creatures: Javok, 5 dwarf forge slaves.

If the characters can see area 8A, read:
Giant-sized weapons and armor lie scattered along the walls of this hot and smoky room. A large iron stove serves as a forge, and in front of it stands a giant with flaming-orange hair and charcoal-colored skin. He wears a chainmail apron, and he holds a white-hot axe blade steady atop an anvil using a pair of iron tongs. Then, he strikes the blade with his fiery hammer. Shackled dwarves and several orc slaves, all covered with soot, are helping the giant by pumping the bellows and assembling armor.

If the characters can see area 8B, read:
This area contains an iron maiden, a wooden rack, iron boots, thumbscrews, chains, whips, branding irons, and strappados. Two hill giants wearing black hoods torture a half-orc strapped to the rack. One of them tightens the winch while the other lashes the half-orc with a scourge. Mounted above a pit of hot coals in the center of the room is a heavy iron spit to which a gagged dwarf has been tied.

The hill giant torturers must succeed on a DC 17 Perception check to hear sounds of combat in the smithy, while the fire giant and his slaves hear sounds of combat in the torture chamber with a DC 21 Perception check.

All dwarf slaves wear shackles on their ankles. While shackled, a creature is slowed. Shackles can be unlocked (Thievery DC 20), or they can be broken (Athletics DC 29).

8A. Smolderheart's Smithy: This smoke-filled area contains a large iron stove that serves as a forge. The fire giant Smolderheart rarely leaves this room except to escort exhausted slaves to and from area 9A.

Forge: This furnace is a 10-foot-high iron cube with an opening on its eastern face. Magically bound within the forge is a fire elemental that can be unleashed if the forge is damaged sufficiently (AC/Reflex 3, Fortitude 15; immune to fire, necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage; hp 100) or a character trained in Arcana succeeds on three DC 20 Arcana checks (each check is a standard action). A character inspecting the forge can, with a successful DC 20 Arcana check, recognize the true nature of the forge and how to free the elemental bound within. The unleashed elemental is enraged and attacks the nearest creature. It won't attack its liberator or any creature its rescuer asks it not to attack (Intimidate or Diplomacy DC 20; DC 29 if the rescuer does not speak Primordial and cannot otherwise communicate with the elemental). It fights until destroyed or until it has no enemy targets. If it survives, it tries to escape the steading, causing as much damage as possible on the way out.

Any creature that enters the forge or starts its turn there takes 15 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

Water: Two stone basins near the forge contain water used for cooling hot metal. Against the south wall is an iron-framed bed where Smolderheart sleeps from time to time. The water basins and bed are treated as difficult terrain.

Smithed Items: Piled against the walls of the room are some of Smolderheart's creations, including giant-sized weapons (nineteen longspears, forty-one spears, sixteen battleaxes, and nine two-handed swords) and various pieces of giant-sized armor.

8B. Torture Chamber: This area contains various implements of torture. The two hill giants who work here are torturing of pair of prisoners when the characters first arrive. A disobedient dwarf slave is chained to the iron spit in the torture chamber, while a half-orc prisoner named Javok is strapped to the rack, screaming in anguish.

Pit of Hot Coals: A creature suspended over the smoldering coals takes no damage but is restrained until it escapes (DC 20) or is cut free. Releasing a creature tied to the spit requires a standard action. Once freed, the creature is weakened until it takes an extended rest or until it receives the benefit of a Remove Affliction ritual.

Any creature that enters the coal pit or starts its turn there takes 5 fire damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

Iron Maiden: This iron coffin has a lid lined with iron spikes. Its square is difficult terrain, and the iron maiden can provide cover. If a Medium or smaller creature is pushed pulled or slid into the iron maiden's square, that creature must succeed on a saving throw. If the saving throw fails, the iron maiden's lid snaps shut on the creature, dealing 10 damage and ongoing 5 damage. The character stops taking ongoing damage only once the iron maiden's lid is opened (Athletics or Thievery DC 20; DC 29 from inside).

Wooden Rack: A creature strapped to the rack is restrained until it escapes (DC 29). Releasing a creature tied to the rack requires two standard actions. A creature tortured on the rack is, upon its release, weakened until it takes an extended rest or until it receives the benefit of a Remove Affliction ritual.

8C. Torturers' Quarters: This area contains a pair of giant-sized beds covered with musty furs and two large, unlocked wooden chests. The chests contain assorted mundane items (see "Treasure," page 3). In addition, one chest contains a sack of 500 gp, and the other contains a *potion of vitality*.

Tactics: Smolderheart orders the orc skullclubbers to attack intruders while he tries to grab an enemy with *smoldering tongs* and then strike the grabbed foe with *flaming warhammer*.

If the hill giants investigate sounds of combat in area 8A, they flay enemies with their scourges. If the opportunity presents itself, one of the giants tries to bull rush a character into the iron maiden (see area 8B).

Smolderheart, Fire Giant Smith	**Level 16 Brute**
Large elemental humanoid (giant)	XP 1,400
HP 192; **Bloodied** 96	**Initiative** +8
AC 28, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 28	**Perception** +10
Speed 7	
Resist 15 fire	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Smoldering Tongs** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 14 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 22). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage.	
Special: While he is grabbing a creature with the tongs, Smolderheart cannot use *smoldering tongs*.	
⊕ **Flaming Warhammer** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 6 damage plus 2d8 fire damage.	
Tongs and Hammer ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: Smolderheart uses *smoldering tongs*. If he grabs a target, he then uses *flaming warhammer* against that target.	
Str 23 (+14) **Dex** 11 (+8) **Wis** 15 (+10)	
Con 22 (+14) **Int** 10 (+8) **Cha** 13 (+9)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Giant	
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, iron tongs	

2 Hill Giant Torturers — **Level 13 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (earth, giant) — XP 800 each

HP 159; **Bloodied** 79 — **Initiative** +7
AC 25, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23 — **Perception** +6
Speed 8

Standard Actions

⊕ **Scourge** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 12 damage, or 3d10 + 15 damage against a prone target.

⸸ **Flaying Trip** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚃ ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 12 damage, ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and the target falls prone.

Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 5 (+3) **Cha** 7 (+4)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, scourge, black leather hood, knife

Fire Elemental — **Level 11 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental magical beast (fire) — XP 600

HP 107; **Bloodied** 53 — **Initiative** +14
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23 — **Perception** +6
Speed 10, fly 6 (clumsy)
Vulnerable cold (see *frozen in place*)

Traits

Frozen in Place
Whenever the fire elemental takes cold damage, it cannot shift until the end of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. Reflex
Hit: Ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Minor Actions

Flickering Flame ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The elemental shifts 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

Seething Fire (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An attack hits the elemental.
Effect (Free Action): Each enemy adjacent to the elemental takes 5 fire damage.

Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 24 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 11 (+5) **Int** 5 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+3)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** understands Primordial

5 Orc Ruffians — **Level 12 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 175 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +6
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 — **Perception** +6
Speed 6 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage.

Triggered Actions

Savage Comeback ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc uses *club*. If the attack hits, the orc instead drops to 1 hit point.

Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 11 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 8 (+5) **Cha** 9 (+5)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment club

Javok, Half-Orc Scout — **Level 11 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid — XP –

HP 110; **Bloodied** 55 — **Initiative** +11
AC 25, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +6
Speed 6 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Large Knife** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 8 damage.

⸸ **Windfang Strike** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Effect: Javok can shift 2 squares before or after making the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 4d6 + 15 damage.

Triggered Actions

Resilient Dodge ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Trigger: Javok is hit by an attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Javok gains 10 temporary hit points and shifts up to 3 squares.

Skills Endurance +12, Intimidate +12, Stealth +14
Str 17 (+8) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 15 (+7)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment Large knife

Javok

Javok is a scout who was captured by the giants while on a reconnaissance mission. He recently tried to lead the orc slaves in a revolt against his captors, but the uprising was put down quickly. He grabs a large knife off the corpse of one of his torturers, fights alongside the characters, and even sacrifices himself to ensure their survival. Until he takes an extended rest or receives the benefit of a Remove Affliction ritual, Javok is weakened.

If the characters ask Javok to escort freed slaves and prisoners to safety, he does so without hesitation. Javok can propose the idea if the players don't come up with it on their own, but ultimately he does whatever the characters ask of him with little concern for his safety.

Dwarf Slaves

Escorting the dwarf slaves safely from the steading garners the characters a minor quest reward (see "Quests," page 2).

If the characters think to ask the dwarves their names, they give their names as Thoot Grimhold, Dwern the Sly, Gobb Brightshield, Nyzan Silvervein, and Zorn "Big Z" Ironbeard.

5 Dwarf Forge Slaves — **Level 8 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid — XP –

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20 — **Perception** +6
Speed 5 (2 while shackled) — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Hammer** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 9 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Equipment hammer, iron shackles

9. The Temple and Environs

Trap/Hazard Encounter Level 7 (1,600 XP)

These areas are unlit, and characters entering them feel a palpable sense of foreboding. The source of this dread isn't obvious until the characters reach the abandoned temple (area 9C), which the hill giants unearthed several months ago.

Light: None.

Trap: Wall of Madness.

When the characters enter area 9B, read:

The walls of this collapsed corridor bear faded murals depicting figures clad in violet robes. The figures march solemnly toward the north. Tentacles protrude from their robes where arms and legs should be.

When the characters arrive at area 9C, read:

This dark room is strangely free of dust and lined with green stone veined with purple. Four pillars of similar colored stone are carved to resemble knots of tentacles that unfurl and spread across the vaulted ceiling. Empty alcoves line the north and south walls, and an altar of translucent yellow stone stands at the far end of the room. Behind the altar is a deep alcove with a concave back wall made of glassy, violet stone. You see a monstrous form reflected in its surface, and then you realize that the reflection is yours.

A DC 21 Religion check reveals that the temple is likely to be dedicated to an evil godlike being known as the Elder Elemental Eye. A DC 29 Religion check is required to know that this entity also goes by the name Tharizdun.

9A. Slave Quarters: Moldy straw pallets cover the floor of this hall. The giants allow their slaves to rest only a few hours before setting them to work in the smithy (area 8A) or the caverns (areas 10B and 10C).

9B. Collapsed Hall: The walls that run north to south bear faded murals. The murals depict figures clad in violet robes marches solemnly toward the north. Tentacles protrude from the robes where arms and legs should be.

9C. Abandoned Temple: This temple was built hundreds of years ago by worshipers of the Elder Elemental Eye. The translucent yellow altar feels greasy to the touch but has no obvious effect upon those who touch it. If a character places a holy symbol of the Elder Elemental Eye on the altar, the symbol sinks into the altar and transforms into an amorphous blot. After a few seconds, this blot coalesces into a purple gem with black veins. The gem rises up to the top of the altar, where it can be removed safely. The gem is worth 1,000 gp. If the characters have no such symbol, they can obtain a gem by triggering the wall of madness trap (see below).

Every time the altar receives the appropriate offering, it creates a new gem. However, a single creature can receive the gift only once.

Wall of Madness

When a character goes behind the altar, read:

This concave, violet wall draws your eye, and as you gaze into its reflective surface, an amorphous form with writhing black tentacles appears within. You suddenly feel the urge to do something . . . terrible.

A character who enters the concave area triggers a trap. If a character bearing the Elder Elemental Eye symbol scar touches the altar, the scar disappears from the character's flesh, and the character loses all daily powers until he or she takes an extended rest. The altar then disgorges a 1,000 gp gem (as described above).

Development

The characters need to recover only one purple gem to complete a minor quest (see "Quests," page 2).

Wall of Madness — **Level 13 Elite Trap**
Object — XP 1,600

Detect automatic — **Initiative** –
HP 60 in each of six 5-foot sections
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** –
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage

Arcana

✦ **DC 20:** The character discerns the wall is a link to the Far Realm.

✦ **DC 29:** The character concludes that standing close to the wall, such as in any space beyond the altar, might trigger a trap.

Dungeoneering

✦ **DC 20:** The character realizes that the wall is made from a substance not native to the world.

Triggered Actions

Madness (charm) ✦ **At-Will**

Trigger: A creature moves within 2 squares of the wall.

Effect: A raised scar shaped like an inverted equilateral triangle inscribed with a "Y" whose branches touch the sides of the triangle (the symbol of the Elder Elemental Eye) appears in a random location on the triggering creature's body, usually on the forehead. The creature has a strong urge to touch the altar.

Attack (Free Action): Ranged 10 (one creature); +16 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated (save ends). On its turn, the dominated target attacks the nearest creature.

First Failed Saving Throw: The target is dominated (save ends; the target takes a -2 penalty to the saving throw). On its turn, the dominated target attacks the nearest creature.

Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is dominated (save ends; the target takes a -4 penalty to the saving throw). On its turn, the dominated target attacks the nearest creature.

Third Failed Saving Throw: The target is overcome by madness and drops to 0 hit points.

Countermeasures

✦ A character carrying an Elder Elemental Eye holy symbol or bearing the symbol as a scar does not trigger the trap.

✦ **Disable:** Arcana DC 29 (standard action within 10 squares of the wall). *Success:* The trap is disabled for 1 round. *Failure (24 or lower):* The trap attacks the creature attempting to disable it.

10. Southern Caverns

Combat Encounter Level 14 (5,150 XP)

These natural caves wend their way through the rock. The giants have begun mining them for ore, with the help of slaves and a pair of knowledgeable stone giant overseers. The slaves and overseers carry lanterns to help them see in the dark.

Light: Dim light (sputtering torches).

Monsters: 1 cave roper, 2 stone giant mine overseers, 10 orc ruffians.

Other Creatures: 10 dwarf mine slaves.

As the characters approach area 10A, read:
Dungeon masonry gives way to rough-hewn walls streaked with veins of pale green crystal. Mining sounds come from deeper inside the caverns.

The stone giant overseers are using dwarf slaves to mine for ore. They have split the miners into two groups. The giants have also negotiated a truce with the roper and use it as a guard. Do not place the roper until it's spotted (DC 28 Perception check) or until it attacks.

Areas 10A and 10C have 20-foot-high ceilings. Ceiling height in area 10B ranges from 15 to 20 feet.

Rubble: These squares are difficult terrain.

Sinkholes: Each of these naturally formed pits is 30 feet deep (Athletics DC 15 to climb).

10A. Guard Post: A roper guards the main entrance to the southern caverns, snaring and devouring unescorted slaves and other passersby not allied with the giants. It hides by assuming the form of a jagged mound of rock that rises naturally from the floor.

10B. Mining Teams: Dwarf slaves and orc ruffians are scattered throughout these caverns, stone giant overseers watching over them.

All dwarf slaves wear shackles on their ankles. While shackled, a creature is slowed. Shackles can be unlocked (Thievery DC 20), or they can be broken (Athletics DC 29).

10C. Overseers' Cave: This cave contains two 5-foot-high ledges that serve as beds for the stone giant overseers. Between the ledges rests a large, locked stone chest (Thievery DC 28 to open). The chest holds an assortment of mundane items (see "Treasure," page 3) as well as a golden skull with gems for eyes (1,500 gp), a cured displacer beast fur (1,500 gp), and 1,200 gp in loose coins.

Tactics: The roper attacks the first character to come within its reach (the squares it can reach are shaded on the map). If it grabs one or more enemies with its tentacles, it uses *reel* to pull them into adjacent squares so that it can bite them.

The stone giant overseers are close enough to the roper to hear sounds of battle in its area. The orc ruffians watch the dwarf slaves while the giants confront intruders. If one of the overseers is taken down, the other commands the orcs to join the battle.

The giants use *stone burst* to create difficult terrain that they ignore. In melee combat, the giants prefer to call forth sharp rocks from the floor with *stone skewer*.

10 Orc Ruffians — **Level 12 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 175 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +6
AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 **Perception** +6
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Club (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 12 damage.

Triggered Actions

Savage Comeback ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc uses *club*. If the attack hits, the orc instead drops to 1 hit point.

Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 11 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 8 (+5) **Cha** 9 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment club

2 Stone Giant Mine Overseers — **Level 14 Controller**
Large elemental humanoid (earth, giant) — XP 1,000 each

HP 143; **Bloodied** 72 **Initiative** +9
AC 28, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26 **Perception** +9
Speed 8 (earth walk) Low-light vision
Immune petrification

Standard Actions

Spear (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 11 damage, and the giant slides the target up to 2 squares.

Hurl Rock (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 13 damage, and the target falls prone.

Stone Skewer ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 11 damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).

Stone Burst (zone) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Close burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 13 damage, and the target falls prone.
Effect: The burst creates a zone of difficult terrain that lasts until the end of the encounter. Creatures that have earth walk can ignore this difficult terrain.

Triggered Actions

Stone Bones ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: The giant is hit by an attack.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The giant gains resist 5 to all damage against the triggering attack.

Skills Arcana +13, Athletics +18, Dungeoneering +14, Stealth +14
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 15 (+9) **Wis** 15 (+9)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 18 (+11)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Giant, Primordial
Equipment hide armor, spear, 3 rocks

Cave Roper	Level 12 Elite Controller
Large elemental magical beast (earth)	XP 1,400
HP 252; **Bloodied** 126	**Initiative** +7
AC 26, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23	**Perception** +9
Speed 2, climb 2 (spider climb)	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

Tentacle Release

Before a creature makes an attack roll against the roper, it can choose to target one of the roper's tentacles. The tentacles use the same defenses as the roper. If the attack hits, it does not deal damage or otherwise affect the roper, but one of the roper's grabs end (of the attacker's choice).

Stony Body

The roper can retract its tentacles and closes its eye and mouth to resembles a natural rock formation. While the roper is on a horizontal rock surface, a creature must succeed at a DC 28 Perception check to see through the roper's disguise.

Standard Actions

⊕ Tentacle ✦ At-Will

Requirement: The roper must have fewer than two creatures grabbed.
Attack: Melee 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage, and the roper grabs the target (escape DC 20). Until the grab ends, the target is weakened.

⸸ Double Attack ✦ At-Will

Effect: The roper uses *tentacle* twice.

⸸ Bite ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the roper); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 4d12 + 12 damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

⸸ Reel ✦ At-Will (1/round)

Attack: Melee 10 (each creature grabbed by the roper); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The roper pulls the target up to 5 squares.

Skills Stealth +12

Str 19 (+10)	**Dex** 12 (+7)	**Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 22 (+12)	**Int** 11 (+6)	**Cha** 9 (+5)

Alignment evil **Languages** Primordial

10 Dwarf Mine Slaves	Level 8 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP –
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +3
AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20	**Perception** +6
Speed 5 (2 while shackled)	Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ Pick (weapon) **✦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 10 damage.

Str 12 (+5)	**Dex** 9 (+3)	**Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+4)	**Cha** 10 (+4)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Equipment pick, iron shackles

11. Northern Caverns

Combat Encounter Level 13 (4,800 XP)

These caverns are home to four umber hulks.

Light: None.

Monsters: 1 umber hulk bewilderer, 3 umber hulk tunnelers.

When the characters reach area 11A, read:

Veins of green crystal run through the walls of this cavern, which is bisected by a glittering stream of water that flows toward the north.

The umber hulks are hidden at the bottom of sinkholes and should not be placed until their presence is revealed. The giants occasionally offer the hulks prisoners as tribute to keep them from encroaching on the southern caverns (area 10).

Ceiling height in area 11A ranges from 20 feet (near the sinkholes) to 30 feet (in the middle of the cavern). The ceiling in area 11B is 15 feet high; in area 11C, it's 20 feet high.

An underground stream cuts through the middle of the main cavern before spilling into a cistern (area 11D). The stream is 3 feet deep and treated as difficult terrain.

Umber Hulk Bewilderer	Level 15 Controller
Large natural magical beast	XP 1,200
HP 148; **Bloodied** 74	**Initiative** +11
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25	**Perception** +15
Speed 5, burrow 2 (tunneling)	Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, or 2d8 + 12 against a stunned or dazed target.	
⊹ **Stunning Gaze** ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +18 vs. Will	
Hit: The target is stunned until the end of the umber hulk's next turn.	
Minor Actions	
⊹ **Staggering Gaze** (psychic) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +18 vs. Will	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 psychic damage, and the umber hulk slides the target up to 5 squares.	
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+10)	
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+7)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Rubble: Squares filled with rubble are treated as difficult terrain.

Sinkholes: Each of these naturally formed pits is 20 feet deep (Athletics DC 15 to climb).

11A. Umber Hulk Cavern: The stream that bisects this cavern flows toward the north. Two sinkholes, one on each side of the stream, serve as lairs for the umber hulks. At the bottom of the southernmost sinkhole is a brass scroll tube containing a ritual scroll (Drawmij's Instant Summons). The northernmost sinkhole contains a ceremonial crystal dagger with an amethyst set in its pommel (1,500 gp) and a corroded holy symbol shaped like an equilateral triangle with a "Y" inscribed in it (the branches of the "Y" touch the sides of the triangle). A DC 21 Religion check confirms that the symbol represents the Elder Elemental Eye, an ancient evil power. A DC 29 Religion check is required to know that the Elder Elemental Eye is also known by the name Tharizdun.

3 Umber Hulk Tunnelers	Level 15 Skirmisher
Large natural magical beast	XP 1,200 each
HP 148; **Bloodied** 74	**Initiative** +13
AC 29, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25	**Perception** +15
Speed 5, burrow 2 (tunneling)	Darkvision, tremorsense 5
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Snatch and Run** ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The umber hulk uses *claw* twice against the same target. If at least one of the attacks hits, the umber hulk shifts up to 5 squares, pulling the target with it to a square adjacent to it.	
Minor Actions	
⊹ **Rebuffing Gaze** (psychic) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +18 vs. Will	
Hit: Until the end of the target's next turn, it takes 2d6 psychic damage whenever it enters a square closer to the umber hulk.	
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+10)	
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+7)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

The holy symbol can be used to activate the altar in area 9C. Both the holy symbol and the ceremonial dagger were possessions of an Elder Elemental Eye cultist who perished here decades ago.

11B. Collapsed Hall: This tunnel collapsed long ago, before the hill giants built their steading above the dungeon. The sound of moving water can be heard to the north and east.

11C. Cistern: The underground stream pours into this room through a 5-foot-wide crack in the southeast wall and disappears through smaller, impassable fissures to the southwest. A shallow pool of cold water forms in the middle of the room. The hill giants draw their drinking water from this source.

Tactics: The umber hulks climb out of their sinkholes when one of them sees the characters' lights or senses the characters' footsteps. Each tunneler selects an enemy and uses *snatch and run* to isolate its prey, tearing it apart with its claws and relying on *rebuffing gaze* to keep others away. The bewilderer uses *claw* against victims of *stunning gaze*. It uses *staggering gaze* to send enemies toppling into nearby sinkholes. The umber hulks do not pursue prey beyond areas 11A–C.

12. The Chief's Treasury

Combat Encounter Level 13 (4,000 XP)

Chief Nosnra keeps most of his treasure here, his allied iron dragon as a guard. Ceilings throughout this area are 20 feet high.

Light: None.

Monsters: Feramaug.

As the characters approach area 12A, read:
Beyond a raised wooden portcullis is a spacious 20-foot-high room supported by four pillars. The walls and pillars bristle with iron spears to a height of 15 feet. You see two other passages leading from the room, with similar portcullises hanging above them.

With a DC 20 Perception check, characters notice fresh and old bloodstains on the floor and on the heads of the spears. (The blood comes from prisoners that Nosnra fed to the dragon.)

Feramaug is unusual in many respects. Chief Nosnra befriended her long ago, and the two have remained staunch allies over the years. When one of the three portcullises is lifted (see below), Feramaug moves quietly to the mouth of her cave and makes a Stealth check to avoid detection. Do not place the dragon on the map until she is revealed.

12A. Feramaug's Playground: Wooden portcullises set into the ceilings above the entrances are normally in the lowered position. They drop or raise when the lever in area 12B is pulled. Manually lifting a portcullis requires a DC 29 Athletics check. A portcullis can also be destroyed (AC/Reflex 3, Fortitude

15; immune to necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage; hp 100).

The walls and pillars of this room have cruel iron spears jutting out of them, fashioned by the fire giant Smolderheart (area 8A). The spears are secured with mortar and very sturdy. These walls of spears rise to a height of 15 feet (halfway up the walls and pillars). Any creature that enters or starts its turn in a square bristling with spears takes 10 damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

12B. Feramaug's Lair: The iron dragon sleeps at the back of this cave, the floor of which is littered with the bones of past victims (mostly prisoners provided by Chief Nosnra). A large wooden lever in the dragon's cave lowers and raises the portcullises in area 12A.

12C. The Chief's Treasury: This vault contains three large, locked wooden chests (Thievery DC 20 to open), as well as one final trap to catch the unwary.

One chest contains a suit of *+4 sunleaf leather armor* (or another level 17 uncommon magic item), a bejeweled gold scepter (7,500 gp) wrapped in a gold-embroidered vest sewn with gems (2,500 gp), and a cask of excellent wine (500 gp).

The second chest contains a *+3 rod of reaving* (or another level 15 uncommon magic item) resting atop a folded *+4 cloak of resistance* (or another level 17 uncommon magic item).

The third contains a platinum brooch shaped like the holy symbol of Lolth (2,500 gp) and four 500 gp gems resting on a bed of 4,000 gp. Buried under the gold is a wooden scroll tube containing a map. The map is drawn on a ragged piece of dwarf skin and marks the locations of the hill giant steading, the stone giant warrens, the glacial rift of the frost giants, and the hall of the fire giant king.

Tactics: When the characters try to cross the room, the dragon emerges from her lair under a veil of invisibility and uses *breath weapon*, hoping to impale enemies on the chamber's iron spikes. Until her breath recharges, she uses *lightning jaws* followed by *elusive invisibility*. Feramaug fights to the death to defend the treasury (area 12C).

Feramaug, Adult Iron Dragon Level 13 Solo Lurker
Large natural magical beast (dragon) XP 4,000

HP 536; **Bloodied** 268 **Initiative** +14
AC 27, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24 **Perception** +15
Speed 8, fly 10 Darkvision
Resist 20 lightning
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

Draconic Frenzy ✦ Aura 2
If Feramaug is not invisible, any enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 damage.

Action Recovery
Whenever Feramaug ends her turn, any dazing, dominating, or stunning effect on her ends.

Instinctive Relocation (teleportation)
On an initiative of 10 + her initiative check, Feramaug teleports up to 5 squares, becomes invisible, and uses *lightning jaws* as a free action. She then becomes visible. If she cannot use free actions due to a dominating, stunning, or unconscious effect, then that effect ends instead.

Standard Actions

Bite (lightning) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage plus 1d6 + 6 lightning damage.

Lightning Jaws ✦ At-Will
Requirement: Feramaug must be invisible.
Effect: Feramaug uses *bite* twice.

Breath Weapon (lightning) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + 12 lightning damage, and Feramaug slides the target up to 3 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and Feramaug can slide the target 1 square.
Effect: Feramaug's aura also deals 10 lightning damage until the start of her next turn.

Minor Actions

Elusive Invisibility (illusion) **✦ At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Feramaug becomes invisible until the end of her next turn or until she hits or misses with an attack.

Triggered Actions

Bloodied Breath ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Feramaug is first bloodied.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Breath weapon recharges, and Feramaug uses it.

Skills Acrobatics +15, Athletics +14, Stealth +15

Str 16 (+9)	**Dex** 18 (+10)	**Wis** 19 (+10)
Con 22 (+12)	**Int** 14 (+8)	**Cha** 11 (+6)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant

Development

Recovery of the map that shows the location of the frost giant and fire giant strongholds completes a major quest (see "Quests," page 2).

Concluding the Adventure

Once the characters defeat Chief Nosnra and learn the locations of the other giant lords and their strongholds, they can return to civilization to spend their hard-earned gold and collect on their various quests. They have a few days to recover from their ordeal before they are once again called upon to break the enemy alliance, this time by confronting its most reluctant member: Thane Arlak of the stone giants.

In the course of exploring the steading, the characters will likely stumble upon clues that foreshadow events to follow:

- **Letters:** Characters might find a couple of significant letters in the steading, one addressed to Chief Nosnra and the other addressed to the stone giant Laerthar. The former refers to the fire giant king by name and was written by someone named Obmi. The latter makes mention of the stone giant thane and is signed by someone named Belastraya.
- **Obmi:** Characters who research the name Obmi and succeed on a DC 28 History or Streetwise check deduce that "Obmi" is most likely Obmi Ironwhisper, a scheming dwarf noble who was

exiled from his clanhold many years ago. The characters encounter him in "Hall of the Fire Giant King" (*Dungeon* 200).

- **Belastraya:** Characters who investigate the name Belastraya and succeed on a DC 28 History or Nature check know that Belastraya is the sister of Arnak, the stone giant thane.
- **The Elder Elemental Eye:** Characters who explore the abandoned temple (area 9C) have a close encounter with the Elder Elemental Eye, which plays a pivotal role in the unfolding story. They encounter a larger temple dedicated to this ancient force of evil in "Hall of the Fire Giant King."

AUTHOR'S ENDNOTE: UPDATING A CLASSIC

In reimagining "Steading of the Hill Giant Chief," I've inflicted some violence to the maps and encounters to make the adventure a fun and balanced 4th Edition experience, acknowledging that this creates some mapping challenges for Dungeon Masters with limited tabletop space. I hope that DMs with fond memories of the original read this latest incarnation and feel the same overwhelming desire to run the adventure as I felt back in 1980, when I read Gary Gygax's adventure for the first time.

—Christopher Perkins

The Adventure Continues . . .

"Steading of the Hill Giant King" can be played as the first adventure in a four-part series. The subsequent chapters of this series are briefly described below, giving you an idea of where the campaign is headed.

"Warrens of the Stone Giant Thane"

Wherein the characters turn one giant lord against the others, cracking the enemy alliance.

"Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl"

Wherein the characters plumb the depths of an icy rift and confront the tactical mastermind behind the giants' raids.

"Hall of the Fire Giant King"

Wherein the characters challenge the mighty fire giant king and discover the secret power behind the throne.

Author Bio

Christopher Perkins is the D&D Senior Producer at Wizards of the Coast LLC. He writes: "Ever since I started working on 4th Edition, I've been aching to update the classic G-series of D&D adventures, breathing new life into Chief Nosnra, Jarl Grugnur, and King Snurre while adding some memorable villains and twists of my own." Chris dedicates this adventure to the memory of Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, two great inspirations.

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Monster Manual Update:
Griffon

By Logan Bonner

Illustration by Heather Hudson

These fierce, majestic sky-hunters nest on rocky cliffs. Griffons are prized as mounts for their loyalty and battle prowess.

Griffons combine the strongest traits of swift-winged birds of prey and hunting beasts of the land. Their greatest assets are their brawny bodies and their acute senses that let them pick up on the slightest sound and see clearly for miles. A lone griffon can take down an elephant, or carry a horse and its rider back to the nest to eat. Griffons hunting in packs give armies pause.

The branches of griffonkind, hippogriffs and griffons, share a reputation as terrors of the skies. With their leonine bodies and dagger-like claws, griffons prey on almost anything, including their hippogriff cousins. The equine hippogriffs fill many roles: predators of wild cattle and horses; prey for griffons, rocs, dragons, and other aerial predators; and mounts for anyone who can capture and train them.

Winged Steeds: If they're captured before maturity, hippogriffs make swift, loyal mounts. Empires of past ages employed legions of hippogriff riders. The fierce griffons require far more work to train, and the process isn't for the meek: One accident can be fatal. Once it takes to the harness, though, a griffon bonds to a single rider for life. (Hippogriffs are far

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"Old Tessa, you have been my faithful steed for many years. But that is a griffon coming, and it is time I take my leave."

–Leth the Sly

less selective.) Efreets prize the eggs of the rimefire griffons native to the Elemental Chaos. They keep the beasts as pets or war mounts, exhibiting those that can't be properly trained.

Because hippogriffs and griffons are in such demand as mounts, their eggs fetch a tidy sum. A nest contains no more than one or two eggs, but each one is worth up to 1,000 gp. All sorts of merchants offer to purchase griffon eggs, often acting as intermediaries for others who are preparing for war but don't want to draw attention to themselves. Sometimes a griffon's nest contains additional treasure–perhaps gear left over from a traveler who became prey, or sparkly items that drew the griffon's eye (which might be valuable crystals and gems, or just bits of glass). Getting an egg out from under the watchful eyes of a mated pair of griffons is no easy task, though.

Hunt in Prides: When they aren't serving other creatures, griffons and hippogriffs hunt for food. They sometimes hunt or dwell alone, but most live in small prides of four to seven members. One alpha male leads the pride, choosing the hunting grounds and directing the pride's response to food shortages, either by moving to a new territory or changing the pride's hunting habits. Anyone who manages to control the alpha male earns the servitude of the entire pride.

Hippogriffs prey on herbivores exclusively, but griffons kill and eat any type of beast–including hippogriffs, though they prefer other creatures. Horses are the favorite food of both types of griffons. Mounted warriors traveling through mountain passes might have their steeds abruptly snatched up from under them–or might be taken with their mounts. Griffons have been known to go after horses even under arrow fire from those animals' riders. Lorekeepers claim that the existence of griffons is the main reason there aren't more pegasi.

Heraldic Symbols: The image of a griffon is a widespread heraldic symbol signifying ferocity, power, and especially retribution. It says, "Do not try to take what I have, or you will face my wrath." Those who carry the symbol of the griffon are fiercely proud. Mountain dwarves and dragonborn use it, as do some of the more warlike races such as giants and hobgoblins. For dwarves, the griffon has a deeper meaning: It's the counterpart to the manticore emblem sometimes used by duergar. Both sides believe that their symbol illustrates the differences between the two cultures and proves that theirs is better.

The hippogriff signifies reliability and speed, as opposed to the griffon's ferocity. This symbol is used less often, usually by couriers.

Hippogriff **Level 5 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 200

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative** +7
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 4, fly 10

Traits

Aerial Agility (mount)
While the hippogriff is flying, its rider gains a +1 bonus to all defenses.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.

↓ **Diving Overrun** ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The hippogriff must be flying.
Effect: The hippogriff charges a Medium or smaller enemy and makes the following attack instead of a melee basic attack. After attacking, the hippogriff lands in an unoccupied space adjacent to the target.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target falls prone.

↓ **Flyby Attack** ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hippogriff flies up to its fly speed and uses *bite* once during that movement. It does not provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Str 19 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Hippogriff Dreadmount **Level 5 Soldier**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 200

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 4, fly 10

Traits

Sturdy Mount (mount)
The dreadmount can move 1 square fewer than an effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide. When an attack would knock it or its rider prone, the dreadmount can make a saving throw to prevent it or its rider from falling prone.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.

Triggered Actions

↓ **Wing Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: While the hippogriff is not flying, an adjacent enemy willingly moves without teleporting to a square that is not adjacent to the dreadmount.
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.

Str 21 (+7) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Griffon	**Level 7 Brute**
Large natural beast (mount)	XP 300
HP 98; **Bloodied** 49	**Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17	**Perception** +9
Speed 6, fly 10	
Immune fear (while bloodied)	
Traits	
Blood Frenzy	
While bloodied, the griffon can take an additional move action each turn and takes a -2 penalty to all defenses.	
Rabid Charger (mount)	
When the griffon's rider charges, the griffon can use *claw* twice as a free action after the rider's melee basic attack.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC (+14 vs. AC while bloodied)	
Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage.	
Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Rimefire Griffon	**Level 20 Skirmisher**
Large elemental beast (cold, mount)	XP 2,800
HP 186; **Bloodied** 93	**Initiative** +17
AC 34, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31	**Perception** +19
Speed 5, fly 10	
Resist 10 cold, 10 fire	
Traits	
Rider Resistance (mount)	
The griffon's rider gains resist 10 cold and resist 10 fire.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bite** (cold) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 9 damage plus 1d10 cold damage.	
⸸ **Flyby Attack** ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The griffon flies up to its fly speed and uses *bite* once during that movement. It does not provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.	
✧ **Rimefire Blast** (fire) ✦ **Recharge** after the griffon hits twice with *bite*	
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +23 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d10 + 10 fire damage.	
Str 24 (+17) **Dex** 20 (+15) **Wis** 18 (+14)	
Con 18 (+14) **Int** 4 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+10)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

About the Author

Logan Bonner's credits include *The Slaying Stone*™ and *Monster Vault*™. He lives in the Seattle area and works as a freelance game designer, writer, and editor. You can follow him on Twitter, where he's @loganbonner.

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